

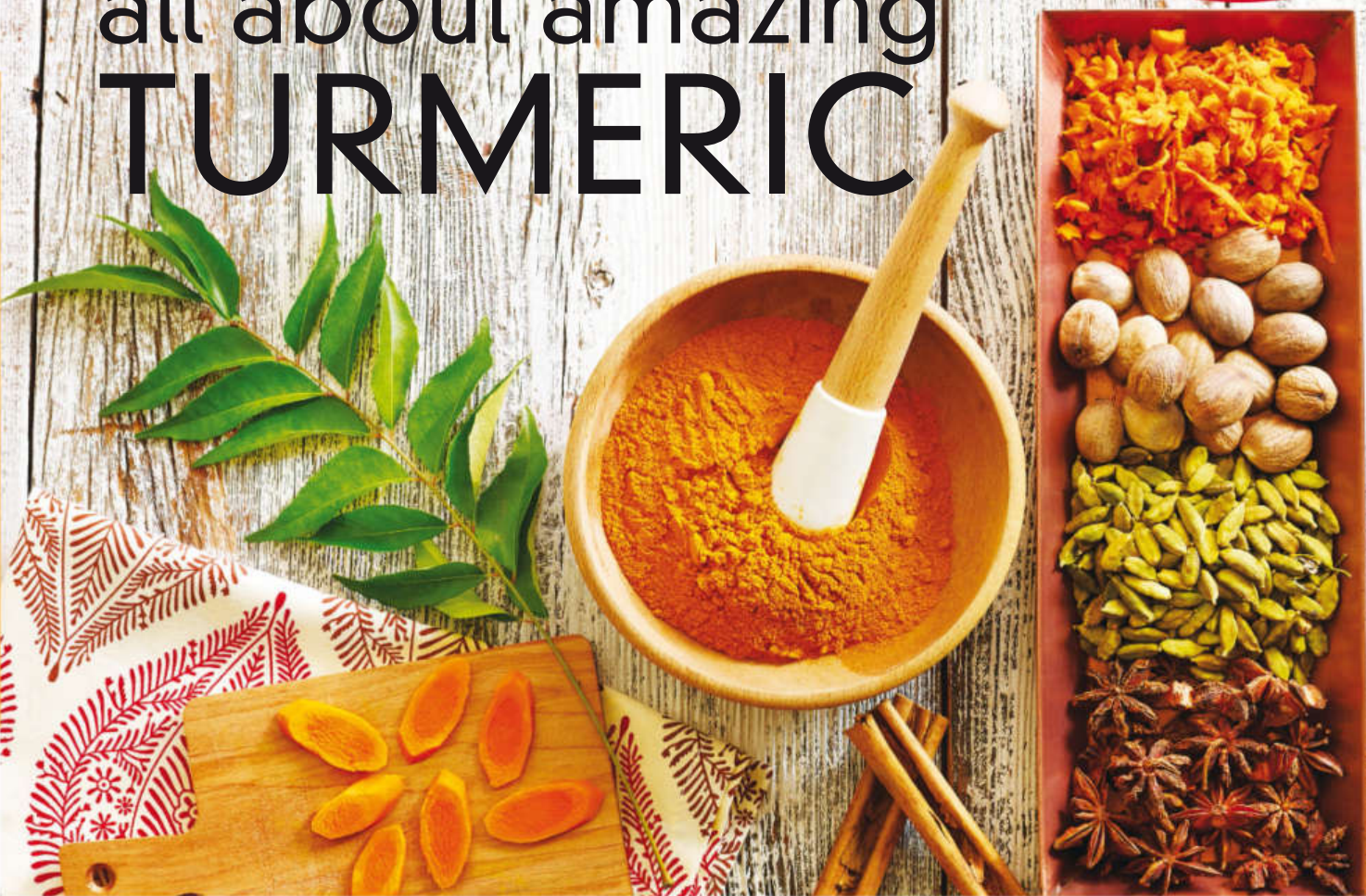
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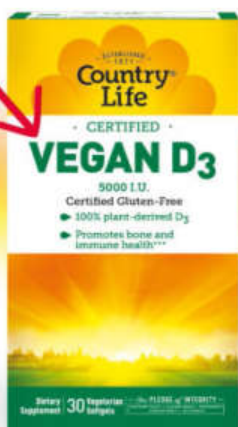
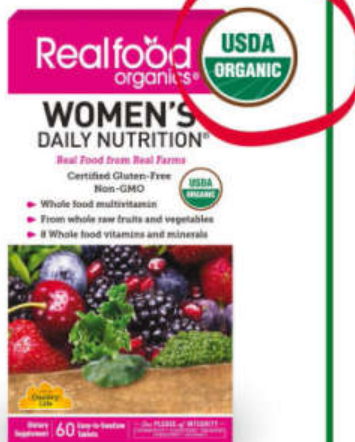
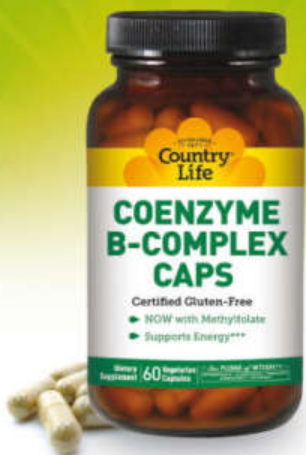
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Circle #11; see card pg 81



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NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2015



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*Cover photo by Ben Pieper,  
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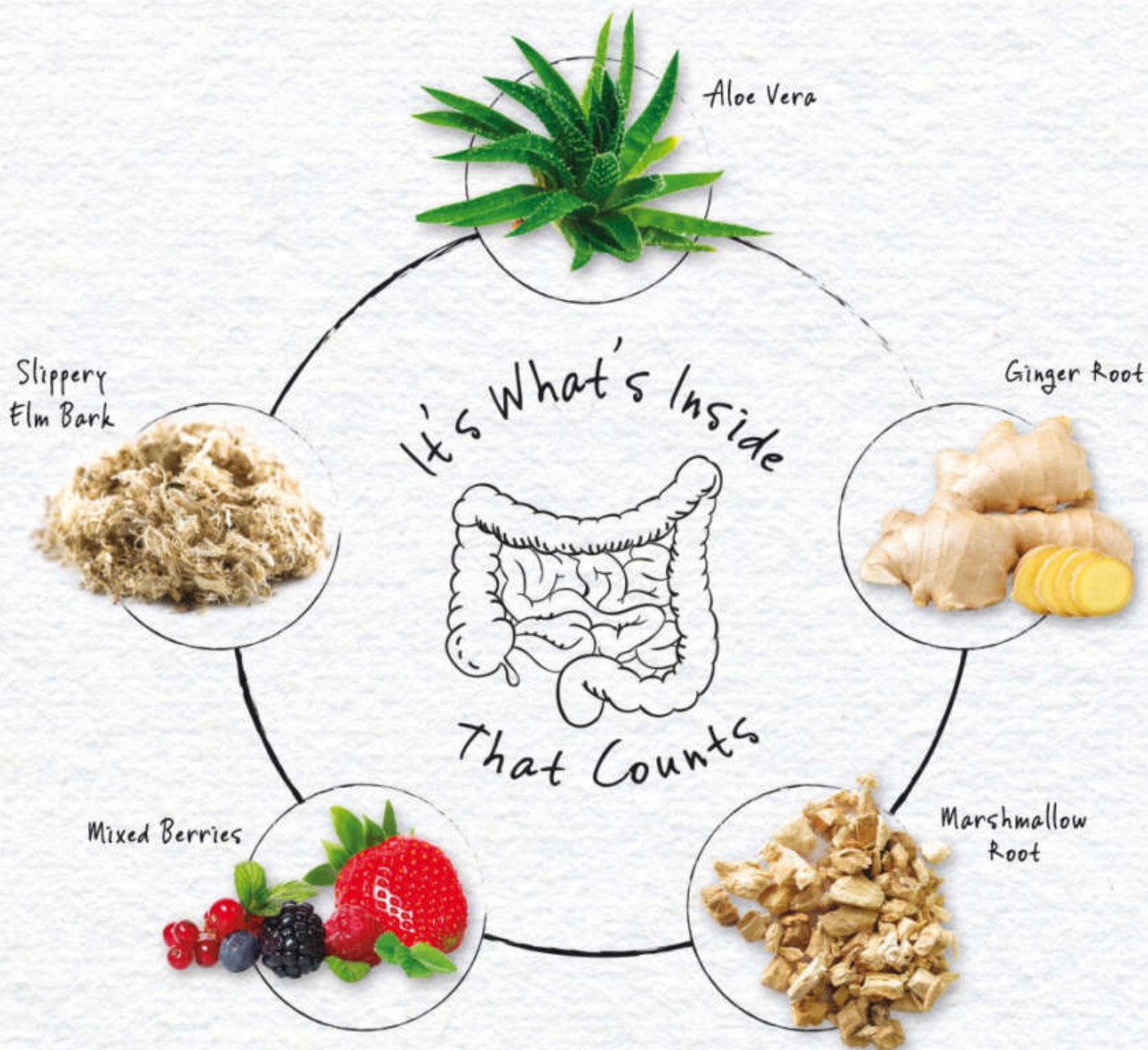
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# Inside this issue



*Jessica*  
Jessica Kellner,  
Editor-in-Chief

## Three things I love this issue

Recipes and tips for staying  
well and enjoying the holidays



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## Healthy Holidays

**IT'S LOVELY TO TALK ABOUT** the joys of the holiday season, but unfortunately, for many people, the holiday season brings up a whole slew of emotions, and not all of them are centered on peace and joy. Many people struggle with sadness, isolation, depression and anxiety at this time of year, whether it's because we miss family members who are no longer here or who we can't be with; because of problematic family relationships; because of overly high expectations; or because of fears of being judged poorly by others, to name just a few examples.

Even if we are fortunate enough to spend the holidays with people we love doing things we enjoy, we can still feel the effects of seasonal depression—which seems all the more difficult during a time when we pressure ourselves to be happy.

Whether you're more prone to battle the stress of too much or the loneliness of too little, it's especially important that we pay attention to our psychological health during the holiday season. Connecting with nature can feel difficult when the days are short and the weather is chilly, but you can ward off seasonal depression and fatigue by getting in some daylight time. Consider starting your day with a brisk walk or jog outside; just 10 minutes of sunlight can help boost mood and energy for the day. And it's doubly important to get physical exercise at this time of year, as it can help manage both high anxiety and feelings of sadness, relieving stress and bolstering mood.

If you know you will be spending a day that's important to you (Thanksgiving Day or Christmas Eve, for example) alone, plan ahead to fill that time. Many volunteer organizations are in need of extra help during the busy holiday season. Community centers or places of worship often host services, pageants and other activities on these days. Or if you'd rather not socialize, consider plans you can make at home. If you miss your mother who has passed away, spend the evening baking a dozen of her favorite kind of pie, then give them away to neighbors, friends or homeless shelters. It might help you feel more connected to your mom, and that you're helping her legacy live on. If you know you will be sad to spend the holiday apart from children or grandchildren, think about connecting with them via video chat, making care packages to put in the mail for them, helping out with kids at a women's shelter or doing something you love with a friend who's also free.

If you have no holiday plans to speak of, consider shifting from the holiday perspective to a more ancient one: Honor this season's traditional role as a time for relaxation, introspection and rejuvenation. If you can, take time off work and stay away from technology, allowing yourself to lose track of what time it is and what day it is. Let the days slow down. Focus on getting extra sleep, indulge in long walks, practice meditation or yoga, read a long novel and stare out the window, allowing both your brain and body to rest. Things don't have to stay the same as they were in the past to be good—you can celebrate your own place in this world with no one else around.

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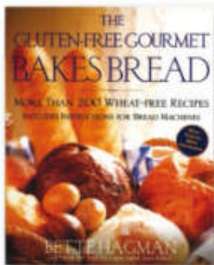
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Circle #17; see card pg 81

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Volume 4, Number 1

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# your Remarks

## THANKS FOR THE SUPPORT

I love *Mother Earth Living*, but I'd decided to cancel my subscription. I just had a baby and have too little time to read it. But when your September/October issue arrived, I finally got a chance to read an entire issue, and my heart is in my throat. Thank you for your articles about factory farming and protein—you've hit on a key issue I care about and you're featuring a charity (Farm Sanctuary) I donate to. My family and I have been vegetarian for years, and vegan since my son turned six months (he's allergic to eggs and dairy). The more we've learned—about nutrition, animal welfare and the environment—the more we believe our best bet for making an impact and living purposefully is to cut out meat, dairy and eggs from our diet. So I'm not canceling, even if I only get time to read one issue a year.

—Anna Ingold, Marietta, Georgia

## SOIL SAVVY

The March/April article "Build Better Garden Soil" resonated with me. I followed the steps to a T last spring and our garden is looking much better! I had drooping bulbs before, and after working on it the bulb heads perked right up!

—Jill Schultz, Calgary, Alberta, Canada

## ANIMAL CRUELTY

I enjoy your magazine and agree that factory farming is harmful to animals, humans and our planet. That said, I must

I can pickled garlic using apple cider vinegar. I add turmeric to the brine and call it my Golden Garlic.

—JENNIFER BRYM-BATES, VIA FACEBOOK

I recently purchased some garlic that is SO smelly! Any tips for preventing the smell until I use it all up?

—FRED JAICKS, VIA TWITTER

One of my favorite chard dishes is to wilt it in a cream sauce and serve it over egg noodles.

—ALANE ANAND, VIA INSTAGRAM

I love sharing your magazine with my 9-year-old grandson, who is beginning to learn all about the herbs we grow and use in our kitchen.

—MARCI STRODE, VIA SURVEYMONKEY

point out that three pages after speaking about the cruelties farm animals face, you cite three animal studies in *Health Watch*. The misery inflicted upon these animals is just as relevant as those animals being exploited in factory farming.

—Cindy Slawski, Medford Lakes, New Jersey

## A COUPLE OF CORRECTIONS

As a microbiologist, I wanted to point out a couple of errors in the September/October article "All About Protein."

Although poultry can contain harmful bacteria, the recommendation to wash poultry before cooking it is erroneous. When you cook meat properly, the harmful bacteria are killed, so to wash it beforehand is superfluous. It can also increase risk of cross-contaminating other ingredients. It was also mentioned that conventional egg production practices have "paralleled the spread of *Salmonella* as a bacterial contaminant in eggs." A minor point, but one many don't realize, is that *Salmonella* is a healthy and beneficial part of a chicken's skin bacterial

flora. In humans, it causes sickness, but in chickens, it's necessary for health.

—Erinn Pirlo, Upper Marlboro, Maryland

## ROSEMARY RESCUE

I live in Houston and planted two rosemary plants a few weeks ago. One seems to be doing well, but the other is struggling. Our sprinklers turn on every other day, so we water our new plants on the other days. Are we watering too much?

—Tara Ross, Houston

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Rosemary only needs frequent watering for the first two weeks. After it's established, ease up—rosemary is sensitive to drainage and can succumb to root rot.

## SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

We love getting your feedback.

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# Best for a Healthy Holiday

IDEAS + PRODUCTS + RESOURCES + MORE



## Holiday Haven

Choose simple gifts, rustic décor and fun with loved ones for a holiday season focused on relaxation and joy, not frenzy.

**THE MODERN HOLIDAY SEASON** is often filled with parties, hours spent shopping for discounts, and (often self-inflicted) pressures to prepare lavish feasts. This is a far cry from the winter season of our past, when our ancestors stayed close to home. As the days shorten, it's as if Mother Nature herself is instructing us to move more slowly and get more rest. No wonder this time of year is traditionally dedicated to family and feasting; what was a way to cope with long nights and cold weather in the Iron Age can today be a way for us to snuggle in and emerge revitalized in the new year. Look for tips for having a simple holiday at home this season throughout this issue.



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## Giving Well

Check out these ideas for useful gifts that will delight your loved ones.



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### 2. SET IT AND FORGET IT

Inspired by an ancient (but still used) irrigation tool, a self-watering planter makes houseplants easy for even the most forgetful among us. Just fill the center chamber with water periodically, and you are set.

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uncommongoods.com

### 3. STOCKING STUFFER

This luxurious facial cleanser is a powder, which eliminates the need for preservatives. The all-star ingredients include oats, yogurt powder, honey powder, green tea extract, calendula, rosehip powder and bentonite clay.

**TO BUY:** \$20,  
lollique.com

### 4. HAND IT OVER

Beautiful, well-made hand towels make a great gift. They pack up small, in case you are traveling, and will bring a smile as they dry hands and wipe up spills all year long. Additionally, these cotton, fair trade towels are handwoven by Ethiopian artisans.

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### 5. PAMPER PURELY

Skip the harsh chemicals in conventional lotions and moisturize with this almond oil-based body oil. It includes botanical oils, but leaves out parabens, phthalates, SLSs and dyes. It's a great base for homemade skin-care recipes, too.

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## | HOLIDAY SPIRIT |

## Give It Up

**Scientifically speaking, you can bestow more happiness with the gift of experiences.**

No matter how hard we might try, finding the perfect gift is not scientifically feasible. According to a study published in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, we give gifts that we think will reflect well on us and endear us to the recipient—not what the recipient actually wants.

This year skip the search for the perfect item and instead bestow the gift of a great time. Compared with material goods, experiences bring more happiness, according to research published in *Psychological Science*. When people spend resources on experiences instead of stuff, they get an uptick in happiness and excitement in advance of the experience that outpaces the boost given by the anticipation of a material good. Experiences trump material goods when it comes to long-term happiness, too. Part of the reason for this is that experiences offer a social element, so we can build up relationships during, and once the experience is over, it's something we can discuss with others. (A trip to the Grand Canyon is more interesting conversation fodder than describing the features of a new camera.) Read on for just a few ideas for fun, experiential gifts.



Still need inspiration? Find more ideas for experience-based gifts at [motherearthliving.com/experience-based-gifts](http://motherearthliving.com/experience-based-gifts).

## | LIVE IN THE MOMENT |

## Experience Wanted

**Check out five ideas for experience-based gifts.**

### A MEAL AT THEIR FAVORITE RESTAURANT

It might sound boring, but few things are better than a free meal at your favorite spot.

➡ Or share the gift of a home-cooked meal.

### TICKETS TO AN EVENT

An evening of togetherness out on the town can't be beat.

➡ Consider tickets to a concert, a play, the symphony or a sporting event.

### A FAMILY TRIP

Skip all the stuff this year, and take the family on an adventure instead.

➡ You could also consider a couples trip or a getaway with friends you don't see often.



### GIFT OF RELAXATION

Depending on your recipient's needs, consider a massage, a spa treatment, an acupuncture session or a yoga class.

➡ You could even arrange to pick them up afterward for lunch.

### NATURAL ATTRACTION

Check out resources near your recipient's home that offer events of interest.

➡ Check into botanical gardens, a national park, a wildlife refuge or an amusement park.



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➤➤ **WHY THEY'RE CRUCIAL:** We want everyone, not just the more fortunate among us, to have the chance to relish the joy and abundance of the holiday season. Unfortunately, more than 46.5 million people face hunger in the U.S., including 12 million children and 7 million seniors. The good news is that for 35 years, Feeding America has worked to bridge the gap between food waste and those in need. The Feeding America network of food banks secure donated food from farmers, manufacturers, retailers and government organizations. These donations are distributed to local food pantries and meal programs around the country, providing more than 3 billion meals to people across the U.S.

➤➤ **WHAT THEY DO:**

- \* Run a network of 200 food banks across the country
- \* Provide safe and nurturing places for children to have a meal
- \* Distribute food that helps seniors meet their specific nutritional needs
- \* Advocate on behalf of food-insecure Americans through a policy staff based in Washington, D.C., and through the Hunger Action Center, a grassroots online advocacy center

➤➤ **HOW WE CAN HELP:** Throughout the duration of this issue, we're collecting donations to this important charity. To join our efforts, visit [feedingamerica.org](http://feedingamerica.org). Or mail donations directly to Feeding America at P.O. Box 96749, Washington, D.C. 20090-6749. Include the fundraiser name, *Mother Earth Living Gives Back*, on the envelope or check, if you wish. It's our goal to collect \$2,500 for Feeding America.



1 in 6  
 people in the U.S. struggles  
 with hunger

### Did you know...

- \* 15.8 million children lived in food-insecure households in 2013.
- \* 7 million seniors age 60 and older are served by Feeding America each year—as well as nearly 6 million adults between the ages of 50 and 59.
- \* In 2013, 14 percent of households nationwide were food-insecure.
- \* Food insecurity exists in every county in America.

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**NEW!**



| **HANDY HINTS** |

## 8 Household Uses for Orange Oil

Discover handy ways to use orange oil to tackle common around-the-house chores.

**ORANGE ESSENTIAL OIL**, harvested by pressing the rinds of the fruit, can be a workhorse product. Sometimes called sweet orange oil, it's derived from the peels of *Citrus × sinensis* (as opposed to bergamot essential oil, made from the species *C. bergamia*). It's an effective addition to homemade cleaners, thanks to limonene, a compound found in the essential oil that is also a natural ingredient in many commercial cleaning products. In addition, orange essential oil is antibacterial, antifungal and antiseptic.

When shopping for essential oil, be sure to purchase 100 percent pure essential oil. "Fragrance oil," "nature-identical oil" or "perfume oil" aren't the same. Ensure no ingredients are added to the essential oil, and look for products sold in small (4-ounce-or-less) colored bottles—colored glass prevents sunlight from damaging the essential oil. Avoid oils sold in plastic bottles, as the plastic can degrade and contaminate the oil. Also, check the label for the botanical name.



**1 WINTER REFRESHER:** To keep indoor air smelling fresh, mix 8 drops of orange essential oil with 2½ cups warm water in a spray bottle. Spritz as necessary, avoiding eyes, and shake well before use.

**2 LIFT THE MOOD:** Orange essential oil can enhance your mindset thanks to its energizing and pleasant scent. Mix a few drops of the essential oil with ¼ cup sweet almond oil in a small, airtight jar. Dab it on your temples to help with headaches (thanks to orange essential oil's antispasmodic properties) or supercharge your spirits on a cloudy afternoon.



**3 FLAVOR ALMOND MILK:** Put a delicious zing in your almond milk by adding a few drops of orange oil. Soak ¾ cup raw almonds and 4 soft dates (pitted) in 2 cups water overnight. Blend with 2 more cups water until smooth. Add 1 drop cinnamon essential oil and 4 drops orange essential oil, then pour through a mesh strainer or nut milk bag. Serve warm or chilled.

**4 DOUBLE DUTY:** Whip up a natural, insect-repellent glass cleaner by combining 2 cups white vinegar with 10 drops sweet orange essential oil in a labeled spray bottle. Use it to clean windows and mirrors, shaking well before each use.



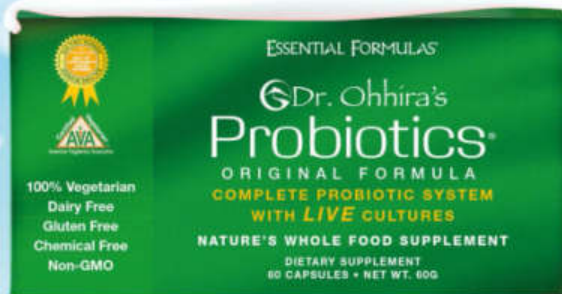
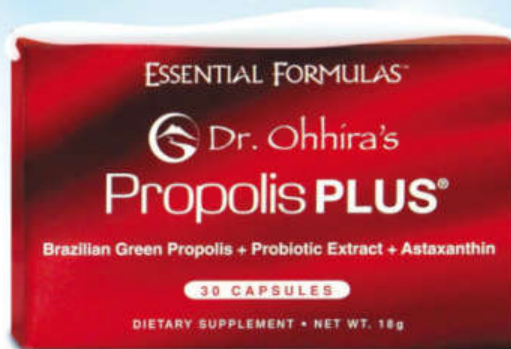
**5 CLEAN FLOORS:** Combine ¼ cup white vinegar with 14 drops orange essential oil. Add to a bucket of water. For extra cleaning power, add several drops of castile soap, but follow with a clean-water mop to ensure floors aren't slippery.

**6 PAMPER FURNITURE:** Moisturize leather furniture with a mixture of ¼ cup flax seed oil, ½ cup white vinegar and 1 to 2 drops orange essential oil. Place the ingredients in a glass jar with a lid. Cover and shake before using. Apply with a soft, clean cloth. Rub the mixture on one small area at a time and buff until the surface dries.

**7 NIX FLEAS:** Mix 2 cups baking soda with 10 to 15 drops orange essential oil. Sprinkle on carpets, then wait a few minutes or up to an hour before vacuuming. Make sure pets and children are kept away and can't ingest the baking soda.

**8 LIP SERVICE:** Make an easy DIY Orange-Mint Lip Balm. Combine 4 tablespoons almond oil and 1 tablespoon grated beeswax in a small pot on the stove. Warm the mixture gently over very low heat until the beeswax melts. Remove from heat, add 1 teaspoon honey and stir thoroughly. Add 5 drops sweet orange essential oil and 5 drops peppermint essential oil, then stir again. Pour into small wide-mouth glass jars and allow to cool, stirring occasionally (if necessary) to keep mixture from separating.

# HONEY BEEES



# AND BENEFICIAL BACTERIA



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**USER TIP**

These products work on different systems in the body. For optimal effects, take propolis with breakfast, and probiotics an hour or two after your evening meal.

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\* These statements have not been evaluated by the Food & Drug Administration. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.



Circle #18; see card pg 81



## Winter's Best Herbal Remedies

Improve your health with bitters, elixirs, syrups and vinegars—traditional herbal remedies perfect for winter.

**ALONG WITH THE BEAUTY** of snow-glistened trees and the festivity of holiday parties, winter also brings the onset of more colds, flu, sore throats and other ailments. Stocking our homes with time-tested, tried-and-true homemade remedies (and potent preventives) is a smart solution. These winter favorites come straight from Grandma's cupboard—from medicinal syrups and vinegars to sweet elixirs and old-fashioned bitters.

Soothe digestion after a big holiday meal with Traditional Medicinals homemade Spiced Dandelion Bitters recipe, available at [traditionalmedicinals.com](http://traditionalmedicinals.com). They also offer a full line of wellness teas formulated by herbalists using pharmacopoeial grade herbs.

Note: Herbal medicines are used for their potential effects in the body; discuss any new remedy with your doctor to make sure it's a good fit for you. Always consult your health-care provider when considering treatments for children younger than 2.

## Syrups

Some of the best herbal remedies for colds and sore throats are medicinal syrups. These simple remedies are a wonderful way to administer bitter-tasting medicinal herbs to reluctant children and adults alike. Sweet and delicious, syrups can be taken by the spoonful and make a lovely addition to teas, desserts and bubbly beverages.

All syrups begin with a concentrated decoction, which is then cooked down and sweetened with either sugar or honey to help preserve the mix and add flavor. This process perfectly concentrates an herb's active constituents, making it great for treating upper respiratory infections. Syrups prepared with honey are usually preferable to syrups prepared with sugar, as honey is naturally antibacterial and effective at soothing and coating sore throats. (Don't give honey to children younger than 2.)

If no preservatives are added to your syrup, it should last about two to three weeks. Add a few drops of vitamin C powder to increase its refrigerated shelf life by one to two weeks.

**GREAT FOR:** Sore throats, upper respiratory infections, preventing and fighting colds and flu

**BEST HERBS FOR SYRUPS:** Elderberry, echinacea, ginger, garlic, licorice, marshmallow root, peppermint, sage, thyme >>

Most herbal remedies can be prepared with fresh or dried herbs.



| REMEDY |

### ELDERBERRY SYRUP

This may be one of the better elderberry syrup recipes on the planet, according to herbalist Rosemary Gladstar. It's delicious enough to use for its flavor alone, but it's also helpful for warding off or speeding recovery from colds and flu, as elderberry has antiviral properties.

**2 quarts fresh ripe elderberries**

**¼ cup warm water**

**¼ ounce freshly grated ginger root**

**½ teaspoon ground cloves**

**Honey**

1. Combine elderberries with water in a large soup pot and simmer until soft. Strain out pulp, reserving liquid. Discard solids and return liquid to pot.
2. Add ginger and cloves, and simmer uncovered until liquid reduces by about half. Pour juice into a measuring cup and note its volume, then return to pot. Add the same amount of honey as you have juice, and stir until thoroughly combined.
3. Let cool, then bottle. Store in the refrigerator and use within 12 weeks. Take 1 to 2 tablespoons several times a day.

Note: Be sure to cook elderberries thoroughly. Raw elderberry fruit, flowers and leaves contain a chemical that produces cyanide, which can cause nausea and vomiting at high doses.

Recipe excerpted from *Rosemary Gladstar's Medicinal Herbs: A Beginner's Guide*, available on page 88; used with permission of Storey Publishing.



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Circle #13; see card pg 81

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Circle #22; see card pg 81



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Circle #28; see card pg 81

## HEALTH HERBAL REMEDIES

On her blog Herbs with Rosalee,  
herbalist Rosalee de la Forêt shares numerous  
excellent recipes and tips including a recipe  
for Orange and Elecampane Herbal Bitters.  
Visit her at [herbalremediesadvice.org](http://herbalremediesadvice.org).



### Bitters

Bitters have long been used to treat illness and flavor cocktails. Made of medicinal, bitter roots, barks or leaves, bitters are primarily taken to enhance appetite and improve digestion. The theory is that the strong, acrid taste of bitters hitting the taste buds signals production of more saliva, acids, enzymes, hormones, bile and so forth, in turn stimulating and improving the activity of the digestive organs as a whole. Bitters are also said to support liver function and boost metabolism.

To make this age-old remedy, tincture the fresh or dried digestive herbs of your choice with 100-proof vodka. Store the solution in a dark amber or cobalt bottle—use dropper bottles to make dosing easier. You can simply add drops directly to your tongue. Bitters can also be added to soda water or cocktails. To improve digestion, take about a teaspoon before or after dinner.

**GREAT FOR:** Stimulating digestion, increasing appetite, supporting metabolism and liver function

**BEST HERBS FOR BITTERS:** Angelica, bitter melon, chamomile, chicory, dandelion, gentian, ginger, orange peel

### | REMEDY |

#### DANDY TUMMY BITTERS

This bitter-aromatic formula is perfect to have on hand during that next big feast. In addition to dandelion's bitterness, the aromatics from fennel, ginger and orange help curb post-dessert bloat and can help relieve excess acid in the stomach, too.

**2 parts dandelion root**

**1 part fennel seed**

**½ part ginger root**

**½ part orange peel**

**100-proof vodka**

1. If tincturing fresh herbs, first clean them, then finely chop or grind them. Fill ½ of a clean Mason jar with the mixture. If tincturing dried herbs, only fill ⅓ of the jar, as dried roots will expand.
2. Cover herbs with 100-proof vodka, filling to the very top of the jar. Be sure your herb mixture is completely covered.
3. Allow mixture to extract for 6 to 8 weeks, shaking often. Strain herbs with cheesecloth and squeeze any remaining liquid back into the extract. Bottle liquid in amber dropper bottles and label with the name, date and parts used.

Recipe excerpted with permission from the Mountain Rose Blog ([mountainroseblog.com](http://mountainroseblog.com)) by Mountain Rose Herbs.

**Elixirs**

Elixirs are another tasty and traditional way to take your herbs. They are essentially sweetened tinctures that typically call on the healing powers of adaptogenic herbs. This useful group of herbs is well known for supporting the health of our adrenal systems, which manage our bodies' hormonal response to stress. These tonic herbs are useful for boosting energy, vitality and possibly even longevity.

This sweet remedy is usually made with brandy, which is gentler on the stomach than other alcohols used for tincturing. It's also naturally warming, smooth and tasty. Elixirs are typically made for sipping, as they are much more palatable than their tincture counterparts, and typically have a shelf life of about three years.

**GREAT FOR:** Enhancing energy and vitality, boosting immunity and overall wellness

**BEST HERBS FOR ELIXIRS:**

Astragalus, ashwagandha, damiana, fo-ti, ginger, ginseng, gotu kola, rhodiola, saw palmetto >>

**| REMEDY |****LONG-LIFE ELIXIR**

This herbal tonic builds strength and vitality. Although it can be used by both sexes, it was formulated specifically for men. You can use different herbs with other health benefits, different proportions and even different flavoring agents—I've never followed the exact recipe twice myself. For each quart of tincture, use two good-sized, high-quality ginseng roots, or whatever you can afford. This strong herbal tonic will taste like a rich liqueur and is excellent for you. Serve it in a fine little goblet and sip it as an aperitif.

**2 parts damiana leaf**  
**2 parts fo-ti**  
**2 parts ginger root**  
**2 parts licorice**  
**2 parts sassafra root bark**  
**1 part astragalus**  
**1 part Chinese star anise**  
**¼ part saw palmetto berries**  
**Asian ginseng roots (2 per quart of elixir)**  
**Brandy**  
**Black cherry concentrate**

1. Place herbs in a wide-mouth glass jar and cover with a good-quality brandy. Seal with a tight-fitting lid and let sit for 6 to 8 weeks—the longer the better.
2. Strain, discard herbs and reserve liquid. To each cup of liquid, add ½ cup black cherry concentrate. Be sure this is fruit concentrate, not fruit juice, and do not add more than ½ cup per cup of tincture. Shake well and rebottle. I often put the whole ginseng roots back into the tincture, but they also can be sliced first. A standard daily dose is about ¼ cup. Note: Damiana is not recommended for diabetics; pregnant or nursing women; or within two weeks of surgery. Fo-ti is not recommended for children; pregnant or nursing women; diabetics; those with liver disease; or within two weeks of surgery.

Recipe adapted, with permission of Storey Publishing, from *Rosemary Gladstar's Herbal Recipes for Vibrant Health*, available on page 88.

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## Vinegars

Although they are not as potent as alcohol-based tinctures, medicinal vinegars are an excellent choice for people with an intolerance to alcohol. Vinegars have been used for thousands of years to preserve foods, and thanks to recent studies we now know that vinegar offers a multitude of health benefits of its own. Apple cider vinegar, in particular, may be helpful in treating diabetes, high cholesterol, poor digestion and minor skin ailments.

Extract nutritious herbs (fresh or dried) with this kitchen staple, and enjoy atop salads and veggies or drink diluted in tea or water. (Avoid direct contact with your teeth, as the acid content in vinegar could harm them.) Compared with alcohol-based tinctures, herbal vinegars have a shorter shelf life—about six months—and don't draw out as many beneficial components of a plant. However, vinegars excel at drawing out minerals and vitamins. As a general guide, take 1 tablespoon vinegar extract up to five times daily as needed.

**GREAT FOR:** Enhancing nutrition, fending off colds and flu, boosting immunity, lowering cholesterol, relieving arthritis, improving digestion

**BEST HERBS FOR VINEGARS:** Dandelion, elderberry, lavender, oregano, plantain, rosemary, sage, thyme, yellow dock

—GINA DEBACKER

### | RECIPE |

#### "FOUR THIEVES" HEALING VINEGAR

According to French folklore, during the 17th century this concoction of herbs and vinegar kept four thieves (grave robbers, actually) from contracting the dreaded black plague. It was said that by dousing face masks with this brew, the thieves were able to rob the graves and houses of the recently deceased without falling ill. I believe it—these herbs are potent antivirals, anti-inflammatories and immune-boosters. When you feel colds, flu or



Herbal vinegars, elixirs and bitters have been used medicinally for thousands of years.

(heaven forbid) the plague approaching, douse your salads and veggies in this (actually quite tasty) vinegar. You can also take it by the tablespoonful in warm water with a dash of honey and lemon.

**2 tablespoons dried rosemary**  
**2 tablespoons dried sage**  
**2 tablespoons dried lavender**  
**2 tablespoons dried wormwood**  
**2 tablespoons dried peppermint**  
**1 quart raw, organic apple cider vinegar**  
**2 tablespoons fresh garlic, chopped**

- 1.** In a clean, quart-size glass jar, combine the first five herbs and apple cider vinegar. Cover and steep in a cool dark place for about 2 weeks, shaking daily.
  - 2.** Strain out herbs and return vinegar to jar. Add garlic and cover. Let steep for a few days more and strain again. Store in the fridge for up to 6 months.
- Note: Wormwood is not recommended for pregnant or nursing women, and could be problematic for those with a kidney disorder, a seizure disorder, porphyria or a ragweed allergy.

Recipe excerpted from *Herbal Goddess: Discover the Amazing Spirit of 12 Healing Herbs with Teas, Potions, Salves, Food, Yoga, and More* by Amy Jirsa, available on page 88.

## | PRODUCTS |

## Herbal Solutions for Winter

This winter, stock your medicine cabinet with these editor-recommended, herb-infused products.

**HERBAL BITTERS**

Crafted by *Mother Earth Living* contributor and herbalist Dawn Combs, this bitters formula uses balancing herbs such as dandelion, ginger and gentian to aid digestion.

**TO BUY:** \$15, mockingbirdmeadows.com

**ADAPT ELIXIR**

Arm yourself against life's everyday stressors with this balancing blend of adaptogenic herbs, including reishi, chaga, eleuthero and schisandra.

**TO BUY:** \$15, terrafirmabotanicals.com

**NIGHTTIME SYRUP**

With its immune-boosting elderberry and rest-promoting lemon balm and California poppy, this syrup is a go-to staple for cold and flu season.

**TO BUY:** \$33, gaiaherbs.com

**ENERGY TONIC**

Take this herbal tonic daily to help boost energy, enhance endurance, increase cognitive function and improve overall well-being.

**TO BUY:** \$33, urbanmoonshine.com

**APPLE CIDER VINEGAR**

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# Thyroid and Digestive Health

Discover the connection between healthy digestion and a healthy thyroid to help balance your hormones and weight.

**IT'S EASY TO SEE WHY** it seems everyone is suddenly talking about the thyroid—one in every 12 Americans has a thyroid disorder, according to 2008 statistics from the National Institutes of Health. Symptoms of thyroid disorders can include changes in weight; anxiety or depression; exhaustion; infertility; and possibly even problems with blood sugar.

The thyroid is a butterfly-shaped gland that sits at the base of our throats and affects functions throughout our bodies via hormones that control metabolism. As one digs deeper into the endocrine system—the thyroid gland in particular—it seems there's no way to truly separate our endocrine health from what's happening with our digestion. In fact, the two are so tightly linked it becomes a “chicken or egg” situation: Poor gut health can suppress thyroid function, while poor thyroid function can affect the digestive tract and potentially lead to an inflamed gut.

If your digestion is slow, or you suffer from bloating or gas issues, ulcers or acid reflux, you may be experiencing or developing thyroid issues. As with many aspects of health, it's comforting to know that we can often effect change on such complex disorders by listening to our bodies and making simple changes to our diets and habits.

Note: If you think you have a thyroid problem or have been diagnosed with one, be sure to discuss any efforts to remedy the issue with your doctor. >>



## | OUR ADVICE |

### How to Support Digestive and Thyroid Health

**1** Eat a pinch of “living” foods at every meal. Good options include fermented vegetables such as kimchi or sauerkraut, and the living bacteria found within high-quality yogurt, kefir and kombucha.

**2** Eat organic food as much as possible to reduce pesticide exposures, which may negatively affect our hormones and our microbiome (gut bacteria).

**3** Reduce stress or increase stress-relieving activities. Stress is directly linked to an increase in cortisol levels.

**4** Increase the intake of prebiotics such as garlic, onions, bananas, Jerusalem artichoke, burdock root and dandelion root to feed your healthy gut flora.

**5** Increase your intake of essential fatty acids, found in fatty fish, pasture-raised beef, many nuts and seeds, enhanced eggs and dairy products, and more.

**6** If you have been diagnosed with hyperthyroidism or Graves' disease, eat seaweed sparingly—about ⅛ to ¼ teaspoon of kelp per day—and have your iodine levels monitored by a professional.



7 Change your diet. Many professionals recommend avoiding gluten altogether for at least six months. In my opinion, unless you have a true food allergy (such as Celiac disease), gluten is not the problem. Simply avoid eating a meal filled with large, hard-to-digest foods (such as meat, dairy and grains) directly after eating another meal filled with large, hard-to-digest foods. Intersperse these meals with easy-to-digest foods—steamed vegetables, bone broth, soup—to keep the workload light and manageable.

8 Add these key nutrients to your diet: Selenium (oysters; Brazil nuts; tuna; kelp; whole grains and vegetables grown in selenium-rich soil; mushrooms; chicken, pork and beef raised on selenium-rich soil; sunflower and sesame seeds); zinc; beta-carotene; vitamins B2, B3, B6, C and E; and iodine (garlic, asparagus, lima beans, mushrooms, sesame seeds, spinach, turnip greens, Swiss chard, summer squash).

9 Support your adrenal glands at the same time by aiming to get the Recommended Dietary Allowance of magnesium, calcium and vitamin C through your diet.

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Circle #34; see card pg 81

## Diet and Thyroid Function

These days, thyroid trouble often stems from our diets. Too much or too little iodine is a common culprit—iodine is necessary to produce thyroid hormones. Iodine is commonly found in iodized salt (it's also in some heart medications and cold and flu medicines), but many people have decreased their iodized salt intake for a number of reasons: concerns over its impact on blood pressure; a preference for sea salt, which doesn't contain iodine; or to avoid anticaking agents, some of which are aluminum compounds. And although many Americans eat processed foods that are high in salt, according to the National Institutes of Health, "The majority of salt intake in the U.S. comes from processed foods, and food manufacturers almost always use non-iodized salt in processed foods." Even for those who do consume enough, water that contains chlorine or fluoride may inhibit iodine absorption. However, iodine consumption is a delicate balance. We don't recommend supplementation without the advice of a professional health-care provider.

Selenium is another important nutrient for the thyroid, but much of it can be lost in the processing, storage and cooking of our food. Portions of our country are covered in soil that's deficient in this trace mineral. Because of this, meats and vegetables we expect to contain selenium may not.

One of the most common problems with digestion in America is also an emerging field of study: We are increasingly realizing that healthy gut flora is critical. If your digestion is not functioning optimally (one to two bowel movements per day and no bloating, reflux or significant gas), it's possible that your gut flora is not well-balanced. Unhealthy bacterial overgrowth can occur in this case, and these bacteria also interact with selenium, potentially making less available for us to absorb from our food. Finally, some outbreaks, such as *E. coli*, may lead to inhibited thyroid hormone production.

## Other Contributing Factors

➡ **HORMONE-DISRUPTING CHEMICALS:** Because the thyroid is dependent on proper hormone function, hormone-disrupting chemicals can unbalance our endocrine systems. For example, plastic food-storage containers and cups often contain hormone-disrupting chemicals such as bisphenol-A (BPA) or phthalates. Storing food and beverages in plastic may eventually alter hormone production. Other plastic products on the market, such as toothbrushes, cutting boards and kitchen tools, can also contain the antibacterial chemicals triclosan and triclocarban, which are also potent endocrine disruptors. Ingestion of pesticide residues; prescription antidepressants;



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corticosteroids (over-the-counter medications for allergies, asthma and arthritis, and topical rash creams); and long-term use of salicylates (found in aspirin) and dicoumarol (found in blood thinners) are also common potential sources of problems. Finally, the thyroid may be inhibited by otherwise healthy dietary choices such as raw turnips, cabbage, mustard, peanuts, pine nuts and millet, as well as soy. These plants may act as goitrogens, which can interfere with the absorption of iodine.

➔ **STRESS:** Stress is often ground zero for both digestive and thyroid issues. In our collective distant past, stressful events were often fewer—albeit larger—and farther apart. Our bodies may have had more time to return to normal levels of peace between stressful incidents. When faced with stress, digestion can come to a full stop as the body diverts energy away from more frivolous pastimes such as assimilating what you had for lunch to more important matters such as quickly getting away from something that wants to eat you for lunch. Today, we are less likely to have to run from a predator, but may be more likely to experience daily stresses rather than occasional ones. Our digestive system, however, reacts in the same way to either stressor, and can shut down its important duties of digestion. A digestive system that's halted too frequently becomes unable to

digest properly. This not only contributes to an impoverished nutritional state but also creates an environment rich in inflammation.

Cortisol is a stress hormone that's released when we sense danger, but increased daily stress has led to long-term increased cortisol levels. The thyroid and adrenal glands are involved in a complex feedback system, resulting in the secretion of various hormones. As the adrenal glands produce more and more cortisol, production of the most active of the thyroid hormones, triiodothyronine (T3), is inhibited. Alterations to T3 levels can lead to various thyroid disorder symptoms, including changes in bowel function, weight loss or weight gain, and an increase in carbohydrate cravings.

➔ **EXTREME CALORIE RESTRICTING/FASTING:** Finally, we can create the perfect storm in our bodies when we add calorie-restrictive diets and/or fasting to the continual stress we experience. Fasting and significant dieting lowers production of T3. When the thyroid is over- or underactive, we experience changes in our appetites. With these feelings we mistake for “hunger,” we can become obsessed with food in the extreme of too much or too little.

—DAWN COMBS



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# The Basics of Acupressure

Get to know your basic pressure points to address acute pain, relieve stress and more.



**WHEN I BEGAN MY TRAINING** as a health-care provider, I already knew that supplements and medications were wonderful allies. But my deepest desire was to learn how to relieve pain and address illness with nothing more than my hands. Since then, acupressure has become a powerful tool to help me fulfill that dream, allowing me to relieve people's pain through this 5,000-year-old Chinese therapy.

Acupressure relies on the same system of channels and points as acupuncture. The difference is the method used to stimulate the points: applying gentle pressure on specific areas of the body instead of inserting needles. Acupressure is safe, effective and easy to learn, making it a wonderful ally for addressing acute pain and common illnesses. Let's step right into the basics of acupressure.

Note: If you have a chronic or significant problem, be sure to discuss acupressure with your health-care provider.

## Getting Started: Channels and Meridians

According to Chinese medicine, not only blood but also energy flows through our

bodies, following pathways like river beds. Although these streams, or channels, of vitality flow near nerve pathways and blood vessels in the body, they're considered separate entities in Chinese medicine. *Qi*, the life force or vitality that flows through these rivers, ultimately connects with our internal organs.

The basic philosophy of acupressure is that, for our organs to be nourished and pain-free, these qi channels must be running smoothly. If a dam develops in any of these channels, pressure will build behind the blockage, and we can experience acute pain. And if these channels run dry, we can experience deficient pain, which is usually a dull and achy discomfort.

The purpose of acupressure is to maintain a smooth, steady flow in the qi meridians, which in turn relieves pain and nourishes the internal organs. Think of each point as an entryway into that qi channel. Some of the points are small access points; others are major harbors. A group of important points bridge multiple channels. These connecting points have deep, broad-reaching effects in the body, extending to much more than pain relief in that immediate area.

## | VITAL INFO |

### Safety First

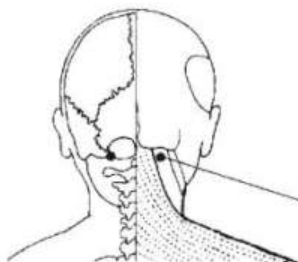
Avoid using acupressure on:

- \* Open sores
- \* Broken bones
- \* Bruised or bloody areas
- \* Burns

You often can assist injured areas by treating acupressure points on the other side of the body. For example, you could support a broken leg—following proper treatment and setting by a medical professional—by stimulating the Gallbladder 34 and Stomach 36 points on the opposite leg. The channels run on both sides of the body. Stimulating both sides is ideal, but—when necessary—treating one side will still affect the other side.

## 6 Powerful & Effective Points

Drawing from my experience as a practitioner, I chose the following powerful, effective points to help you begin your exploration of acupressure. Many of these points have multiple uses. Although they are quite safe overall, pay special attention to the contraindications, particularly for pregnant women.



GB 20

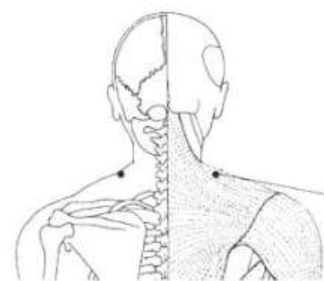
### GALLBLADDER 20 "GATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS"

#### INDICATIONS

- \* Headaches
- \* The beginning of a cold with chills and/or fever
- \* Neck pain
- \* High blood pressure
- \* Insomnia
- \* Eye pain
- \* Memory

#### LOCATION

In the hollow about three fingerbreadths lateral to the spine, below the occipital ridge, between the trapezius and sternocleidomastoid muscles



GB 21

### GALLBLADDER 21 "SHOULDER WELL"

#### INDICATIONS

- \* Shoulder tension
- \* Headaches
- \* High blood pressure
- \* Stress and tension

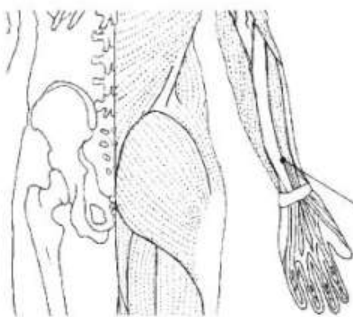
- \* Fatigue
- \* Cold hands and feet
- \* "Downbears qi," meaning it helps move congested circulation away from the head

#### LOCATION

On the top of the mound of the shoulder, about a third of the way between the base of the cervical spine and the acromion process of the shoulder

#### CONTRAINDICATIONS

Not recommended for pregnant women because the "down bearing" action may potentially cause miscarriage; avoid using the point, especially during the first trimester



TW 5

### TRIPLE WARMER 5 "OUTER GATE"

#### INDICATIONS

- \* Shoulder pain
- \* Ear pain
- \* Headaches in the temples
- \* Head cold and influenza
- \* Wrist and finger weakness

#### LOCATION

Two fingerbreadths above the transverse crease of the wrist on the posterior aspect of the forearm >>



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**GALLBLADDER 34**  
**"THE SUNNY SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN"**

**INDICATIONS**

- \* Helps relax muscles, hence for muscle pain, spasms and cramps
- \* Headaches
- \* Fear
- \* Difficulty making decisions
- \* Constipation
- \* Knee pain

**LOCATION**

Outside of the leg, just anterior to (or in front of) the head of the fibula

**STOMACH 36**  
**"THREE MILE"**

**INDICATIONS**

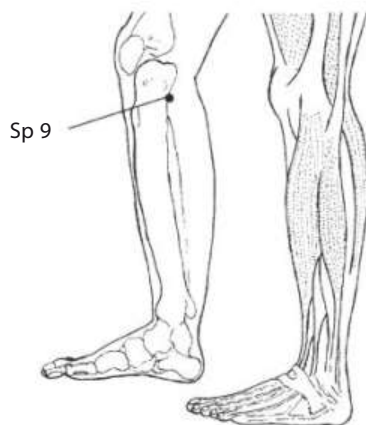
- \* Acute or chronic digestive issues
- \* Nausea
- \* Heartburn, gas and bloating
- \* Depressed immune function
- \* Fatigue
- \* Mastitis
- \* Cough

**LOCATION**

Three fingerbreadths below the knee, one fingerbreadth on the lateral side of the tibia bone

**CONTRAINDICATIONS**

Not recommended for pregnant women, particularly in the first and second trimester



**SPLEEN 9**  
**"SHADY SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN"**

**INDICATIONS**

- \* Digestive issues such as gas and bloating
- \* Knee problems
- \* Varicose veins
- \* Edema (water retention)
- \* Menstrual cramping
- \* Worry

**LOCATION**

On the inside of the leg just below the head of the tibia

Acupressure.com offers useful acupressure flashcards with illustrations by Michael Gach. They include 30 of the most important acupressure points, along with each point's benefits and complementary points. \$10 digital, \$12 print; [acupressure.com](http://acupressure.com)

## Acupressure FAQs

Use this basic information to start experimenting with pain relief using this ancient therapy.

### HOW BIG IS AN ACUPRESSURE POINT?

Most acupressure points are about the size of a dime or nickel, whereas the major connecting points are the size of a quarter. If you touch any part of that area, you will stimulate the point.

### HOW MUCH PRESSURE SHOULD I USE?

Most people learning acupressure apply too much pressure at first, but hard pressure will actually close off the point. Too much pressure can also leave a bruise. Imagine you are pressing on a garden hose filled with running water. If you press too hard, you will shut off the hose and block the flow of water. And if you press too lightly, you will have no effect on the flow of water. Press just enough to feel a slight resistance in the tissue. When you reach the correct depth, you will feel the muscle or surrounding tissue gently "push back." I call this "meeting the point."

When you "meet the point," you may feel a sensation of warmth, coolness or tingling. This is not necessary for a treatment to be effective. Observe over time, though, and you may discover certain sensations in your fingers and hands (it's different for each person) when you effectively stimulate an acupressure point.

Be sure to apply pressure perpendicular to the point rather than sliding the skin and pushing from above or below the point. The more relaxed your hands and fingers are, the more deeply you can press without causing discomfort, and the more likely you are to feel other sensations. Relaxing your hands will make the treatment much more comfortable. With practice, your hands and fingers will develop a mind of their own, and you will be able to sense the correct amount of pressure needed to stimulate the flow of qi through the channels.

#### HOW LONG DO I PUT PRESSURE ON THE POINT?

The amount of time you spend on each point likely will vary from one to 10 minutes. Start with one to two minutes, then gradually increase that over the next few months. Generally, acute illnesses such as a cold or a fever will require less stimulation. Chronic illnesses or more deficient conditions such as chronic sinusitis or chronic digestive issues may require longer periods of stimulation.

Too much stimulation, however, will drain the qi. Thanks to Western philosophy, we tend to think, "A little is good; a whole lot must be a whole lot better!" But this is not true with acupressure. We are aiming for the "just-right" amount.

Children and elderly people need much less stimulation. Hold the acupressure points gently and for shorter periods of time (about a minute or two at most).

#### HOW OFTEN SHOULD I PRACTICE ACUPRESSURE?

For chronic conditions such as asthma, high blood pressure or irritable bowel syndrome, stimulate the appropriate acupressure points daily for 10 to 30 minutes (this is the total time for all points). Even practicing acupressure two to three times a week can be helpful, although daily treatment will produce better results. You can stimulate the appropriate points all at once or stimulate different points as you have time throughout the day.

For acute conditions such as a cold or headache, stimulate the appropriate points for a few minutes, then wait until symptoms worsen before you repeat. You might stimulate a point for two to three minutes, three to four times throughout the day.

JUDITH BOICE, a naturopathic doctor, lives in Fairbanks, Alaska, with her twin teenage sons. She practices at the Alaska Center for Natural Medicine. For free articles and other information, visit [drjudithboice.com](http://drjudithboice.com).



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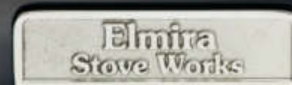
Circle #29; see card pg 81



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## Cook Once, Eat All Week

By dedicating a little cooking time on the weekend, we can quickly prepare nutritious meals throughout the week.

**THE KEY TO EASY**, healthful homemade meals every night? Planning ahead. With efficient use of time and ingredients, you can repurpose meal components without feeling like you're eating the same thing every night. In this sample plan for a week of dinners, each meal works its way purposefully into the next. With a little prep over the weekend and in bite-sized chunks throughout the week, these nutritious, from-scratch meals require only about half an hour per night.

The shopping list on page 39 includes every item you need for this week of dinners.



## Menu for the Week

These recipes are designed to feed a family of four. Scale them up to feed more or make extras for the freezer, if you wish. The plan makes every possible use of a food, sparing ingredients and grocery dollars from going to waste.

**SUNDAY:** Roast Chicken and Vegetables with Brown Rice

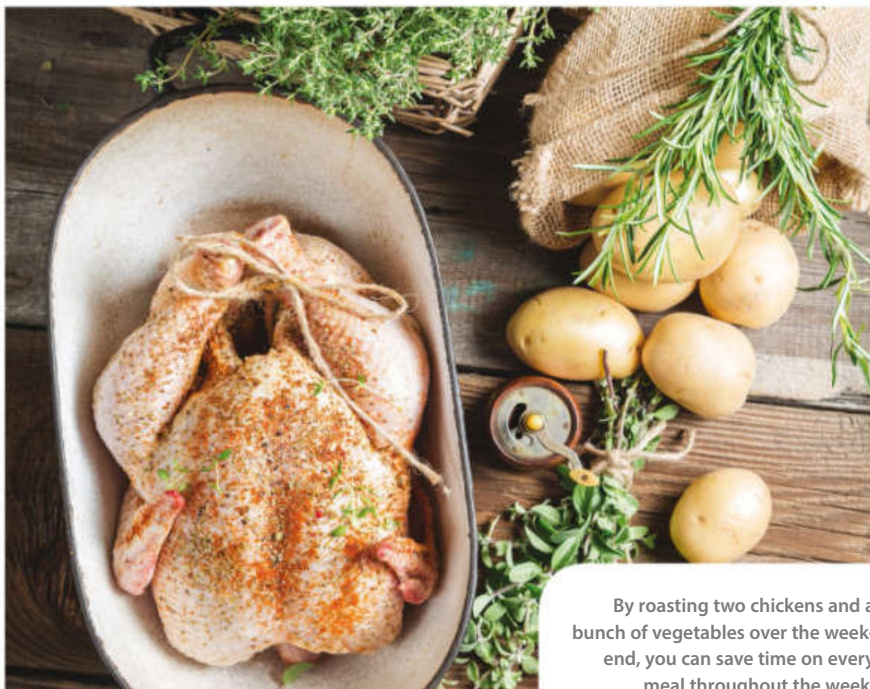
**WEDNESDAY:** Stracciatella Soup with Classic Caesar Salad

**MONDAY:** Vegetable Stir-Fry

**THURSDAY:** Chicken and White Bean Chili

**TUESDAY:** Rosemary Chicken Salad Sandwiches with Raspberry Vinaigrette Side Salad

**FRIDAY:** Vegetable Lasagna with Kale Salad



By roasting two chickens and a bunch of vegetables over the weekend, you can save time on every meal throughout the week.

## Cooking Plan

### SATURDAY

Besides grocery shopping time, your prep on Saturday should take about an hour.

- \* Buy groceries.
- \* Prepare greens for easy use during the week: Rinse and dry spinach; rinse, dry and roughly chop Romaine; rinse, dry and trim kale of stems. Stack and roll up kale leaves into bundles of 4 or 5 leaves, slice bundles into ¼-inch ribbons and finish by chopping everything a few more times. Refrigerate greens separately in containers with damp towels.
- \* Complete Steps 1 and 2 of Roast Chicken and Vegetables recipe (page 40).
- \* Wash and slice 6 ribs of celery to make about 2 cups thinly sliced celery. Refrigerate sliced celery in a lidded bowl of cold water. Roughly chop 4 more ribs of celery, including leaves, and place in freezer container dedicated to stock ingredients.
- \* Peel and mince cloves from 1 head of garlic, cover with olive oil and store in the fridge.

### SUNDAY

Sunday will be your main cooking day, and active cooking time could be close to a couple of hours, depending on how much time you have to begin preparing recipes for the week. All of the cooking here is flexible, and can be done in pockets whenever you have time.

- \* Roast chickens and vegetables (Steps 3 and 4 on page 40). Meanwhile, make a double batch of basic brown rice to use tonight and tomorrow.
- \* After dinner, save leftover vegetables as follows: eggplant, winter squash and zucchini together; bell peppers, mushrooms and onions together in a freezer container with diced mushroom stems; carrots with stock ingredients; all remaining vegetables together; and rice in its own container. Refrigerate these leftovers until needed throughout the week.



- \* Remove remaining skin and meat from chickens. Chop meat into bite-sized pieces and freeze. Save skin separately if desired. Add chicken carcasses and bones to stock container in the freezer.
- \* Freeze or refrigerate remaining chopped chicken.
- \* If you have time, make and refrigerate Rosemary Chicken Salad (page 41). Or you can mix it up Monday or Tuesday.
- \* If you have time, you could also make Homemade Chicken Stock (page 42).

#### MONDAY

Dinner should take about 15 minutes.

- \* Cook Vegetable Stir-Fry (page 40) for dinner.

#### TUESDAY

Making dinner should take about 10 minutes. Soaking beans takes just a minute.

- \* Assemble Rosemary Chicken Salad Sandwiches (page 41).
- \* Make a side salad with the spinach (about 1 cup per person) and raspberry vinaigrette.
- \* Soak beans for Chicken and White Bean Chili (Step 1 on page 42). You can also do this Wednesday.

#### WEDNESDAY

Making dinner will take about 20 minutes. Getting the chili started for Thursday and the kale marinating for Friday will take just a few minutes.

- \* Follow Steps 1 through 3 of Stracciatella Soup recipe (page 42), then let it simmer.
- \* Meanwhile, make Classic Caesar Salad (page 42).
- \* Finish soup and eat with salad.
- \* On a back burner or after dinner, follow Chicken and White Bean Chili recipe (page 42) through Step 2, then cover soup pot and refrigerate.
- \* Remove half of kale from refrigerator and follow Step 1 of Kale Salad recipe (page 43).

#### THURSDAY

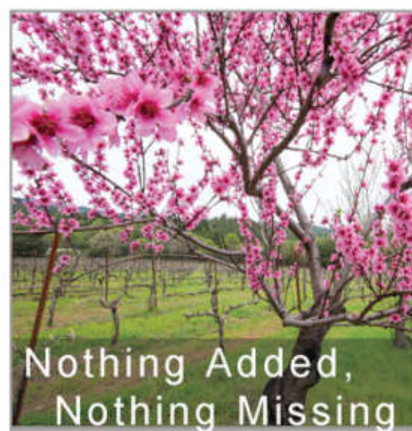
Finishing the chili will take no time at all. Building lasagna for Friday's dinner is the most labor-intensive recipe in this weekly meal plan, so we've broken up the steps to make it easier to manage.

- \* Finish Chicken and White Bean Chili (page 42) for dinner.
- \* On a back burner while chili is warming up, make Famously Easy Tomato Sauce (page 43). Once it's set to simmering, make Classic Béchamel Sauce (page 43). Keep sauces warm on back burner, or cover and refrigerate.
- \* While chili is simmering or after dinner, build Vegetable Lasagna (page 42), cover with foil and refrigerate. If you'll have more time in the morning, build and refrigerate lasagna Friday morning.

#### FRIDAY

Building the lasagna takes about 10 minutes; you can do this up to a few days before or right before cooking. The lasagna takes about an hour to bake.

- \* In the morning, follow Step 3 of Vegetable Lasagna recipe (page 42).
- \* After work, cook lasagna (Step 4).
- \* Serve lasagna with Kale Salad topped with whatever you have left from the week such as Parmesan and Caesar dressing; or toasted almonds with a raspberry vinaigrette. >>



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## Sorted Grocery List

### DRY GOODS

- 1 small bag whole-wheat flour  
(or all-purpose flour)
- Small jar honey
- 4 cups brown rice or quinoa
- ½ cup slivered almonds (toasted  
or untoasted)
- 1 pound dry cannellini, cassoulet  
or Great Northern beans
- 1 pound no-cook, whole-grain  
lasagna noodles
- 2 large cans (30 ounces each, give or  
take) crushed or diced tomatoes,  
or 4 pounds fresh tomatoes
- Loaf whole-grain bread (or make your  
own: [motherearthliving.com/  
no-knead-bread](http://motherearthliving.com/no-knead-bread))
- Whole-grain croutons (or make your  
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### HERBS AND SPICES

- Plenty of sea salt and black peppercorns
- 3 heads garlic
- 2- to 3-inch piece fresh ginger
- 1 bunch each: fresh rosemary,  
thyme, parsley
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes,  
or ½ teaspoon cayenne
- 2 tablespoons sesame seeds
- 2 bay leaves

### OIL, VINEGAR AND CONDIMENTS

- Bottle extra virgin olive oil
- Small bottle soy sauce (tamari or shoyu)
- Small bottle mirin (in Asian section)
- Small bottle sherry vinegar or  
rice vinegar
- Small jar mayonnaise or aioli (or make  
your own: [motherearthliving.com/  
coconut-mayo](http://motherearthliving.com/coconut-mayo))
- Bottle Caesar dressing (or make your  
own: [motherearthliving.com/  
easy-caesar](http://motherearthliving.com/easy-caesar))
- Bottle raspberry vinaigrette (optional; or  
make your own: [motherearthliving.  
com/raspberry-vinaigrette](http://motherearthliving.com/raspberry-vinaigrette))

### FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- 2 medium lemons
- 5 large white or yellow onions
- 1 medium leek
- 1 pound white button or  
crimini mushrooms
- 1 head each broccoli and cauliflower
- 1 each large eggplant and zucchini
- 1 bunch carrots
- 3 bell peppers
- 1 to 2 each: celery roots, potatoes,  
rutabagas, sweet potatoes, turnips,  
winter squash
- 2 to 3 each: beets, parsnips, radishes
- 1 bunch each celery and scallions
- ½ pound red or green grapes
- 3 heads Romaine lettuce
- 2 bunches Lacinato kale



### MEAT, EGGS AND DAIRY

- 2 large, whole, pastured chickens
- 4 pastured eggs
- 10 ounces Parmesan (2½ cups grated)
- 8 ounces mozzarella cheese
- 3 cups milk
- 1 pound unsalted butter >>

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Rosemary Chicken Salad Sandwiches make a low-effort dinner. The chicken salad also tastes great over a bed of greens.



#### | RECIPES |

### ROAST CHICKEN AND VEGETABLES

This fast, high-heat method is ideal for birds that have been raised free-ranging on pasture (they have leaner flesh), and it's also perfect for roasting vegetables.

**PLANNING NOTE:** This recipe is for cooking two birds plus a boatload of veggies at once. A family of four will probably eat most of one chicken during the first meal, leaving another bird and leftover vegetables for meals later in the week.

#### 2 large, whole, pastured chickens

Olive oil, as needed

Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

4 sprigs fresh rosemary, divided

2 medium lemons

4 large white or yellow onions

1 medium leek

1 pound white button or crimini mushrooms

1 head each: garlic, broccoli, cauliflower

1 each large eggplant and zucchini

3 bell peppers

1 to 2 each: celery roots (peeled),

potatoes, rutabagas, sweet

potatoes, turnips, winter squash (peeled and seeded)

2 to 3 each: beets, carrots, parsnips (woody cores removed), radishes

6 tablespoons butter (optional)

4 cups brown rice or quinoa

**1. MARINATE CHICKENS:** Rub chickens inside and out with olive oil, salt, pepper and leaves from 1 rosemary sprig. Pierce lemons all the way through several times with something sharp such as a wooden skewer. Stuff a lemon into cavity of each bird, and sew up cavity with kitchen twine. Refrigerate chickens in a covered container.

**2. PREPARE VEGETABLES:** Have ready 3 sealable storage containers, such as gallon baggies or Pyrex dishes with lids: 1 container is your main vegetable container; 1 will store trimmings (and later, chicken bones) for stock; and 1 will store chopped mushroom stems (and later, some leftover veggies) for the Chicken and White Bean Chili recipe (page 42).

\* Peel and quarter onions. Put onion quarters in vegetable container and trimmings in stock container.

\* Rinse leeks. Slice white and pale green parts into ¼-inch rings; add to onions. Put dark green parts in stock container.

\* Remove mushroom stems, finely chop and freeze for later use. Chop mushroom caps and add to vegetable container.

\* Peel garlic; add whole cloves to vegetable container.

\* Cut broccoli and cauliflower into florets; add florets to vegetable container (you can also chop the stems and add them to the vegetable container, if you wish).

\* Chop remaining vegetables into bite-sized chunks (1-inch cubes) and add to vegetable container. (Put trimmings in stock container.) Pour olive oil over all vegetables, sprinkle generously with salt, pepper and remaining rosemary sprigs. Toss to coat. Refrigerate mixture.

#### 3. ROAST CHICKENS AND VEGETABLES:

Bring marinated chickens up to room temperature before cooking. Preheat oven to 475 degrees. In 1 or 2 large roasting pans, set birds breast-side-down on top of vegetables. Roast for 20 minutes. Remove pan(s) and reduce heat to 400 degrees. Carefully turn birds over, dot tops with pats of butter, and roast another 20 to 30 minutes or until juices run clear when pierced in the thickest part. Let birds rest at least 20 minutes before serving.

**4. PREPARE RICE OR QUINOA:** Prepare 4 cups brown rice or quinoa, following package directions. Reserve half of cooked rice or quinoa for Vegetable Stir-Fry (below).

**5. SERVE:** Carve chickens and serve meat alongside brown rice or quinoa. Scoop about ½ cup roasted vegetables onto each portion of rice, taking care to first toss all vegetables in chicken drippings.

### VEGETABLE STIR-FRY

This recipe comes together in no time because the vegetables and brown rice have been precooked.

**PLANNING NOTE:** For a heartier meal, add a pound of raw shrimp or cubed tofu and ½ cup cashews or peanuts with vegetables.

2 tablespoons olive oil or sesame oil

2 cups cooked brown rice or quinoa

¼ cup soy sauce

¼ cup mirin

2 tablespoons sherry vinegar or rice vinegar

2 to 4 tablespoons minced  
fresh ginger  
2 to 4 tablespoons honey  
2 scallions, thinly sliced, white and  
green parts separated  
½ cup thinly sliced celery  
(prepped Saturday)  
2 tablespoons sesame seeds  
About 5 cups leftover veggies (beets,  
broccoli, cauliflower, leeks, parsnips,  
potatoes, radishes, rutabagas, sweet  
potatoes, turnips)

1. In a large skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat until shimmery. Add leftover rice or quinoa, and stir to heat through. Remove from pan and set aside.

2. Add soy sauce, mirin, vinegar, ginger, honey and white parts of scallions to hot pan. Cook, stirring, for several minutes until liquid is syrupy and reduced. Stir in celery and sesame seeds.



3. Add roasted vegetables, shrimp or tofu, and nuts (if using), toss to coat with sauce, and cook 2 minutes. Serve over rice or quinoa; garnish with green parts of scallions.

### ROSEMARY CHICKEN SALAD SANDWICHES

Leftover roasted chicken can become a delicious and simple chicken salad.

PLANNING NOTE: If you have 10 minutes to make homemade mayonnaise, it'll take your chicken salad over the top:  
[motherearthliving.com/coconut-mayo](http://motherearthliving.com/coconut-mayo).

1½ cups cooked, chopped chicken  
½ cup slivered almonds, toasted  
(to toast, bake at 350 degrees  
for 5 to 10 minutes, then cool)  
1 cup grapes, sliced in half  
½ cup sliced celery (prepped Saturday)  
¾ cup mayonnaise or aioli  
Leaves of 1 to 2 sprigs fresh  
rosemary, chopped  
Leaves of 4 parsley stems,  
finely chopped (save stems for stock)  
Sea salt and freshly ground  
black pepper  
8 slices whole-grain bread

Mix all ingredients and make sandwiches with whole-grain bread. >>

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**HOMEMADE CHICKEN STOCK**

You will use many of the byproducts of recipes here to make this rich, nutritious stock, which then becomes the base of two soups later in the week. You'll probably have some extra to freeze.

**2 chicken carcasses**

**Dark green parts 1 medium leek, roughly chopped (prepped Saturday)**

**Roasted carrots from Roast Chicken and Vegetables (page 40)**

**Trimnings from bell peppers, carrots, onions and parsley (prepped Saturday)**

**Few leaves carrot tops if available**

**Cloves from 1 head garlic**

**4 ribs celery, roughly chopped, including leaves (prepped Saturday)**

**2 tablespoons sherry vinegar or rice vinegar (helps extract minerals from bones)**

**2 tablespoons peppercorns**

**2 bay leaves**

**Several sprigs thyme, or 2 tablespoons dried thyme**

**1.** If using a crockpot, add all ingredients plus enough cold water to cover everything and set it to cook on the lowest/slowest setting. If using a stockpot, add all ingredients plus water, bring to a simmer and allow to bubble away on low heat for several hours—the longer, the better.

**2.** Skim fat and impurities from the top of the pot every now and then while cooking. Pour everything through a strainer and discard solids. Refrigerate or freeze stock.

**STRACCIATELLA SOUP (ITALIAN EGG DROP SOUP)**

This Roman specialty is perfect with a crisp Caesar salad. Croutons are wonderful tossed into the soup, as well.

PLANNING NOTE: When served with a salad, this soup makes a nice light meal. On its own, it's a lovely appetizer.

**¼ cup extra virgin olive oil**

**About ½ the minced garlic (prepped Saturday)**

**2 tablespoons flour**

**8 cups Homemade Chicken Stock (at left)**

**4 eggs**

**½ cup grated Parmesan**

**Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**

**1.** Heat oil over medium in a heavy-bottomed pot. Add garlic; sauté 2 minutes.

**2.** Whisk in flour and stir frequently until you smell a faintly nutty scent.

**3.** Whisk in stock and bring to a boil.

**4.** In a bowl, beat eggs with Parmesan. Slowly add eggs to boiling stock to form strands of cooked egg. Remove from heat as soon as all eggs have been added.

**5.** Season with salt and pepper, and serve.

**CLASSIC CAESAR SALAD**

Romaine is the traditional green for a Caesar salad, but kale makes a nice Caesar, too, if you let it marinate in the dressing for a few minutes before serving.

PLANNING NOTE: Save any leftover croutons for use in the Kale Salad (page 43), if you wish.

**3 heads Romaine or kale, chopped**

**Caesar dressing, to taste**

**Lots of freshly ground black pepper**

**Whole-grain croutons, for garnish**

**2 tablespoons grated Parmesan**

Toss greens with dressing and top with pepper, croutons and Parmesan.

**CHICKEN AND WHITE BEAN CHILI**

Homemade stock makes this chili more richly flavored than anything in a can.

PLANNING NOTE: This recipe freezes well.

**1 pound dry cannellini, cassoulet or**

**Great Northern beans (or substitute canned beans with their liquid and reduce cooking time to 20 minutes)**

**8 cups Homemade Chicken Stock (at left)**

**Chopped mushroom stems and leftover roasted peppers, mushrooms, onions**

**1 cup sliced celery (prepped Saturday)**

**2 teaspoons chili powder**

**2 teaspoons ground cumin**

**2 teaspoons dried oregano**

**1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes, or ½ teaspoon cayenne**

**2 teaspoons sea salt**

**1 pound crushed or diced tomatoes, with their juices**

**About 1 cup leftover pulled chicken, refrigerated or frozen**

**½ to 1 bunch kale, roughly chopped (prepped Saturday)**

**Sea salt and pepper**



**1.** Rinse and soak dry beans overnight.

Rinse soaked beans before proceeding. (Cover and refrigerate soaked beans if not proceeding to next step immediately.)

**2.** In a crockpot set to its lowest setting or in a soup pot, cook beans until tender with all ingredients except chicken and kale.

**3.** When beans are tender (4 to 6 hours in a crockpot or about 1 hour on stovetop), stir in chicken and kale. Season with salt and pepper. Serve immediately.

**VEGETABLE LASAGNA**

If you want meat, add ½ to 1 pound of cooked and crumbled Italian sausage in layers alternating with the vegetables.

PLANNING NOTE: This lasagna includes an easy homemade tomato sauce and a white sauce that helps bind everything into a creamy consistency. To save time, you could use store-bought tomato sauce and omit the béchamel.

**Famously Easy Tomato Sauce (below)**  
**Classic Béchamel Sauce (at right)**

**1 pound no-cook, whole-wheat  
lasagna noodles**

**2 to 3 cups leftover roasted eggplant,  
winter squash and zucchini chunks**

**About 2 cups mozzarella cheese,  
torn or shredded**

**About ½ cup grated Parmesan,  
divided**

1. Make Famously Easy Tomato Sauce.
2. Make Classic Béchamel Sauce.
3. Build lasagna: Butter a 13-by-9-inch baking dish that's at least 2 inches deep. Swirl a bit of béchamel sauce in bottom of pan, then layer noodles so edges overlap about ¼ inch; cut as needed to fit.
4. Spread several spoonfuls of tomato sauce and béchamel sauce over noodles, then sprinkle on vegetables and cover with a layer of cheeses. Continue until the last layer of noodles is added.
5. Cover top with sauces and Parmesan. Cover pan with foil, and refrigerate or freeze if not baking immediately.
6. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Bake lasagna 40 minutes. Remove foil, reduce heat to 350 degrees, and bake another 10 to 15 minutes or until golden and bubbly.

**FAMOUSLY EASY  
TOMATO SAUCE**

This recipe is inspired by Marcella Hazan's Tomato Sauce from *Essentials of Classic Italian Cooking*. If you've never tried this method, it's about to become your go-to red sauce. Extras freeze well.

**3 pounds crushed or diced tomatoes,  
fresh or canned, with their juices**  
**1 teaspoon salt**  
**6 tablespoons butter**  
**1 onion, peeled and cut in half**

1. Simmer ingredients together over low heat for 40 to 50 minutes, occasionally stirring and crushing tomatoes.

2. Remove onion. (If you wish, chop up the cooked onion and add it to the other lasagna vegetables.) Use sauce immediately, or refrigerate or freeze it.

**CLASSIC BÉCHAMEL SAUCE**

You can make béchamel sauce a day ahead and keep it covered in the refrigerator. Heat it slowly to just warm when it's time to use it.

**3 cups milk**  
**5 tablespoons butter**  
**5 tablespoons flour**  
**¼ teaspoon salt**  
**1 cup grated Parmesan**  
**Leaves from several sprigs fresh  
parsley, chopped**



1. In a pan, heat milk to almost boiling. Cover to keep warm and set aside.
2. Melt butter in a heavy-bottomed pot over low heat; stir in flour; cook 2 minutes.
3. Very slowly incorporate heated milk, a little at a time, until thoroughly mixed. Add salt and cook mixture down until it's reduced and thick (like heavy cream), then stir in cheese and parsley.

**KALE SALAD**

Marinated kale can be served alone, but this simple salad is also a great place for remaining odds and ends from the week.

**PLANNING NOTE:** Unlike most salad greens, marinated kale is hearty enough to stay crisp for a few days.

**1 bunch Lacinato kale, chopped  
(prepped Saturday)**  
**Caesar dressing or raspberry  
vinaigrette, to taste**  
**Optional toppings: leftover croutons,  
almonds, Parmesan**

1. Mix kale with dressing thoroughly. Allow to marinate for at least an hour, and up to a couple of days.
2. Serve with optional toppings.

—TABITHA ALTERMAN

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B N O U P

# Revamp Holiday Treats with Healthier Ingredients

Use our easy tips to make over your favorite cool-weather sweet treats.

**THE HOLIDAY DESSERT TABLE** is usually piled high with refined white flour, refined white sugar and plenty of highly processed vegetable oils. Our guide to healthier baking will show you how to replace these ingredients with wholesome versions in ways that boost both nutrition and flavor. You'll love applesauce and pumpkin purée in muffins and cakes; mashed banana in cookies; avocados or black beans in your brownies (we promise!); ancient grains and whole grains in your cakes; and much more.



These yummy Emmer Pear Spiced Cupcakes incorporate whole-grain flour, fruit and lots of healthful herbs.

## | EASY TIPS |

### Healthy Baking Substitutions

#### REPLACE 1 CUP WHITE FLOUR IN...

- \* Any baking recipe: 1 cup whole-wheat flour
- \* Brownies: 1 cup puréed black beans
- \* Cakes, cookies, sweet breads:  
1 cup nut flour
- \* Cakes, cookies, pancakes:  
½ cup coconut flour  
plus 1 extra egg



#### REPLACE 1 CUP SUGAR IN...

- \* Any baking recipe: 1 cup unsweetened applesauce
- \* Cakes, cookies, sweet breads:  
1 teaspoon liquid stevia, or  
2 tablespoons stevia powder plus  
½ cup mashed fruit



#### REPLACE 1 CUP VEGETABLE OIL IN...

- \* Cakes, cookies: 1 cup mashed banana
- \* Dark baked goods: ¾ cup prunes plus ¼ cup boiling water (blended)
- \* Brownies, chocolate cookies:  
1 cup puréed avocado
- \* Muffins, sweet breads:  
1 cup applesauce



#### REPLACE 1 CUP FROSTING ON...

- \* Cakes, cookies, cupcakes:  
1 cup meringue

#### REPLACE 1 CUP RICE CEREAL IN...

- \* Treats: 1 cup brown rice cereal plus  
2 tablespoons ground flax



#### REPLACE CHOCOLATE CHIPS OR COCOA POWDER WITH...

- \* Raw cacao powder or cocoa nibs

Adapted from *The Ultimate Guide to Healthier Baking* by Kate Morin, from [greatist.com](http://greatist.com).

| RECIPES |

## EMMER PEAR SPICED CUPCAKES

The maple cinnamon almond butter glaze for these cupcakes is so great: There's nothing to pipe and the frosting is not too sweet. The quantity and quality of this frosting is much more healthful than your typical butter and powdered sugar concoction. As for the cupcakes themselves, a hefty amount of spice makes them an irresistible fall treat. You can use apples instead of pears, if you wish.

### 2 cups plus 2 tablespoons

whole-grain emmer flour, or

2¼ cups whole-wheat flour

2 teaspoons ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon ground nutmeg

½ teaspoon ground cloves

1½ teaspoons baking soda

¼ teaspoon baking powder

1 teaspoon salt

⅓ cup light olive oil

¼ cup unsalted butter or coconut oil,  
melted and cooled slightly

1 cup plus 2 tablespoons raw sugar  
or light brown sugar

½ cup raw sugar or granulated sugar

2 large eggs, at room temperature

1 cup unsweetened applesauce

1 tablespoon vanilla extract

2 medium peeled pears (about 1½ cups),  
cut into ½-inch chunks

### FOR MAPLE ALMOND BUTTER GLAZE

⅓ cup almond butter

¼ cup maple syrup

¾ teaspoon ground cinnamon

2 tablespoons coconut oil, softened

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

⅓ teaspoon salt

Chopped almonds or other nuts,  
for garnish (optional)

**1.** Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Line 2 cupcake pans with paper liners.

**2.** In a large mixing bowl, mix together dry ingredients (flour through salt). Set aside.

**3.** In another large mixing bowl, mix together oil, melted butter or coconut oil, sugars, eggs, applesauce and vanilla. >>



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Circle #27; see card pg 81

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Circle #21; see card pg 81

Gradually add dry mixture to wet mixture and stir until no streaks of flour remain. Pat chopped pears dry with paper towels, then fold in pears.

**3.** Fill cupcake liners  $\frac{3}{4}$  full and bake for 18 to 22 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean. Let cupcakes cool for 5 minutes in the pan, then turn out onto a wire rack to cool completely, about 1 hour.

**4.** Once cupcakes have cooled, prepare glaze by mixing all glaze ingredients together in a small bowl. Refrigerate for 15 to 20 minutes or until glaze is the consistency of refrigerated almond butter. Spoon 2 teaspoons of glaze on the center of each cupcake. There's no need to spread it as the glaze will slowly spread and drip down for a few minutes after you put it on. Store unfrosted cupcakes at room temperature for up to 4 days, or refrigerate frosted cupcakes up to 4 days. **Makes 18 cupcakes.**

### **SPELT ORANGE PUMPKIN GINGERBREAD BUNDT CAKE**

Served warm or cold, this deliciously moist cake is generously spiced, easy to transport, and feeds a crowd, making it a go-to recipe for any kind of fall gathering. The cake is great without the orange sauce, but it adds a nice touch and a little extra sweetness.

**$3\frac{1}{2}$  cups whole-spelt flour  
or whole-wheat flour**  
**1 tablespoon ground ginger**  
 **$1\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoons ground allspice**  
 **$1\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoons ground cinnamon**  
 **$1\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoons ground cloves**  
 **$2\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoons baking soda**  
 **$\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon baking powder**  
**1 teaspoon salt**  
**4 large eggs at room temperature**  
 **$\frac{3}{4}$  cup honey**  
 **$1\frac{1}{2}$  cups sugar, coconut sugar  
or light brown sugar**  
**1 cup light olive oil**  
 **$\frac{1}{4}$  cup orange juice or water**  
**2 teaspoons vanilla extract**  
**2 teaspoons orange zest**  
**One 15-ounce can pumpkin purée**



#### **FOR ORANGE SAUCE**

**6 tablespoons unsalted butter**  
 **$\frac{3}{4}$  cup raw sugar or granulated sugar**  
 **$\frac{1}{4}$  cup orange juice**  
 **$\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon vanilla extract**

**1.** Adjust oven rack to lower third of oven. Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Spray a 12-cup (10-inch) bundt pan very well with cooking spray.

**2.** In a large mixing bowl, mix together dry ingredients (flour through salt). In another large bowl, using a large spoon or electric hand mixer, lightly beat eggs on low, then add remaining cake ingredients. Stir until thoroughly combined. Add dry mixture to wet mixture, then mix just until combined. Pour batter into prepared pan and bake for 60 to 75 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the middle of the cake comes out clean.

**3.** Let cake cool in pan for 10 minutes, then invert onto wire rack. Wash and dry bundt pan.



**4.** While cake is cooling, prepare sauce. Mix all sauce ingredients together in a small saucepan over medium heat until sugar has dissolved and butter has melted. Place washed and dried bundt pan back over cake and flip over to invert. Using a thin skewer, poke holes almost all the way through the cake. The holes should be about 1 inch apart. Slowly pour the hot orange sauce over the cake. Serve immediately or let cake fully cool in pan. Invert onto a serving plate, cover and store at room temperature for up to 3 days. **Serves 12 to 16.**

### **NO-SUGAR WHIPPED COCONUT CREAM**

This is a great dairy-free, vegan and naturally sweet substitute for regular whipped cream and can be used in the same way for all of your holiday treats. Try it in cream pies; dolloped on top of brownies, pies and fruit desserts; and alongside berries.

**One 14-ounce can full-fat coconut milk**  
 **$\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon vanilla extract**

**1.** Refrigerate coconut milk overnight or at least 6 hours to allow cream to separate from water. Without shaking or turning the can upside down, open the can and scoop out the entire solidified, waxy layer of coconut cream at the top and place into a medium mixing bowl. Don't include any of the coconut water, which you can use for smoothies or drink as is.

**2.** Using an electric hand mixer or a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, whip cream at low speed until creamy, then increase to high speed. Beat for 3 to 5 minutes or until light and fluffy and soft peaks form. Add vanilla and beat until combined. This is fluffiest right after whipping, but it keeps well in the refrigerator for 3 days in an airtight container. **Makes 14 ounces.**

Recipes adapted with permission from *The Sweet Side of Ancient Grains: Decadent Whole Grain Brownies, Cakes, Cookies, Pies, and More* by Erin Dooner, available on page 88. Follow Dooner's blog at [texanerin.com](http://texanerin.com).

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Circle #1; see card pg 81

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# The Great Cholesterol Myth

Long-standing dietary advice has told us to reduce cholesterol intake, but a closer look suggests that advice may be misguided. Learn more about the history of this information, studies surrounding cholesterol's effects on heart health and how to protect your heart's health.

BY JONNY BOWDEN & STEPHEN SINATRA



## In 1953,

a young, ambitious biologist named Ancel Keys proposed the then-radical theory that heart disease was caused by consuming too much fat in the diet. It's hard to imagine that this theory was radical given how widespread its acceptance is today, but at the time the prevailing belief was that diet had little to do with heart disease. However, Keys felt he was on to something. Previous research by Russian scientists had shown that when you fed rabbits large amounts of cholesterol and then dissected them later on, their arteries were filled with cholesterol-containing plaque and looked suspiciously like the arteries of people who died of heart disease. Never mind the inconvenient fact that rabbits are herbivores and the amount of cholesterol they normally get in their diets is pretty close to zero. And that other animals,



such as rats and baboons, do not react in the same way as rabbits to a high-cholesterol diet; they metabolize cholesterol very differently.

The recommendation to eat “no more than 300 mg of cholesterol” a day remains the standard dietary advice of every major health organization to this day. Because fat in the diet and cholesterol in the blood were believed to be linked, Keys began to investigate dietary fat and its connection to heart disease. He looked at data on fat consumption and heart disease from various countries and published the results in his famous Seven Countries Study, which supposedly demonstrated a clear link between the amount of dietary fat consumed and the incidence of heart disease. Those countries eating the most fat also had the highest

rates of heart disease. Sounds like an open-and-shut case against dietary fat, doesn't it?

Except it was anything but. Keys actually had available to him reliable food consumption data from 22 countries, but he used only seven. By hand-selecting the seven countries that supported his preconceived hypothesis, Keys was able to make a convincing case that there was a direct connection between fat consumption and heart disease. The fact that Keys chose to include only seven countries and ignored the other 15 didn't go unnoticed. Many researchers criticized Keys for conveniently omitting data that didn't support his theory. When analyzing the data from all 22 countries, researchers found that the correlation between fat, cholesterol and heart disease vanished.



Relaxing with a cup of tea in the morning can help jump-start good heart-health habits, such as meditation and deep breathing.

## The Rise of the Cholesterol Theory

The Seven Countries Study is the cornerstone of current cholesterol and fat recommendations and official government policy, so it's worth looking at in some detail. Keys examined saturated fat consumption in seven countries: Italy, Greece, the former Yugoslavia, the Netherlands, Finland, the United States and Japan. It hardly went unnoticed that Keys chose only the countries that fit his hypothesis. In fact, British physician Malcolm Kendrick used the same data available to Keys and quickly discovered that if you simply chose different countries, you could easily prove that the *more* saturated fat and cholesterol people consumed, the *lower* their risk of heart disease.

Another researcher who questioned Keys was a British doctor named John Yudkin from the University of London. He found that, in some countries, the intake of fat was virtually the same, but the rates of cardiovascular disease were vastly different. For example, Finland had a high per capita fat intake and a high rate of heart disease. But Yudkin found that the people of West Germany ate the exact same amount of fat as the people of Finland, yet they had about one-third the rate of heart disease. In addition, the Netherlands and Switzerland had only one-third the rate of heart disease seen in Finland, even though the Dutch and Swedes consumed even more fat than the Finns.

Cherry-picking the countries that proved the theory was only one of the many problems with the Seven Countries Study. There were also tremendous variations in heart mortality within these countries, even though saturated fat con-

sumption was identical. In Finland, for example, the intake of saturated fat was almost identical in two population groups from Turku and North Karelia. But heart mortality was three times higher in North Karelia. Similarly, saturated fat intake was also equal on two Greek islands, Crete and Corfu. But heart mortality was a whopping 17 times higher on Corfu than it was on Crete.

How did Keys explain these facts, which were clearly present in his data? Simple. He ignored them. Keys was a member of the nutrition advisory committee of the American Heart Association, so despite the flaws in his study, he managed to get his theories officially incorporated into the 1961 American Heart Association dietary guidelines, where they have influenced government policy on heart disease, fat consumption and cholesterol for decades.

"The largest study ever to ask whether a low-fat diet reduces the risk of getting cancer or heart disease has found that the diet has no effect," *The New York Times* reported in 2006.

## Consensus? Not Exactly

George Mann, associate professor of biochemistry at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine and a participating researcher in the Framingham Heart Study (see sidebar on page 51), was another of Keys' doubters. The diet-heart idea is the "greatest scam" in the history of medicine, he said. "[Researchers] have held repeated press conferences bragging about this cataclysmic breakthrough, which the study directors claim shows that lowering cholesterol lowers the frequency of coronary disease. They have manipulated the data to reach the wrong conclusions."

Mann also declared that National Institutes of Health (NIH) "used Madison Avenue hype to sell this failed trial in the way that media people sell an underarm deodorant!" Michael Oliver, a highly respected British cardiologist, concurred. "The panel of jurists...was selected to include experts who would, predictably, say that...all levels of blood cholesterol in the U.S. are too high and should be lowered." But the dissenting voices were met with radio silence.

In the late 1970s, the Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs made its final report: Low-fat diets would afford significant protection against coronary

heart disease for men, women and children older than 2. “The evidence justifies...the reduction of calories from fat...to 30 percent, calories from saturated fat to 10 percent or less, and dietary cholesterol to no more than 250 to 300 mg daily,” it declared.

So how did that advice work out? One study that attempted to answer this question was the Women’s Health Initiative, a \$415 million NIH study that involved close to 49,000 women, ages 50 to 79, who were examined for eight years in an attempt to answer the question, “Does a low-fat diet reduce the risk of getting heart disease or cancer?”

They got their answer. “The largest study ever to ask whether a low-fat diet reduces the risk of getting cancer or heart disease has found that the diet has no effect,” *The New York Times* reported in 2006. Of course, these questionable findings didn’t stop the cholesterol-lowering, fat-avoiding juggernaut that continues, albeit bruised and battered, to this day. And we have to give the misguided researchers kudos for their motives—by reducing cholesterol levels, they sincerely believed they would be reducing heart disease. As Dwight Lundell, a doctor and author of *The Cure for Heart Disease*, wryly puts it, “They were taking the bull by the horn—but it was the wrong bull.”

One of the most respected researchers in the world, Michel de Lorgeril, a French cardiologist at the prestigious National Center for Scientific Research, the largest public organization for scientific research in France, has authored dozens of papers in peer-reviewed journals, and he was the lead researcher for the Lyon Diet Heart Study, a 1999 study on the cardiovascular effects of eating a Mediterranean-style diet. The following quotation comes from his only book written in English: “We can summarize...in one sentence: Cholesterol is harmless!”

Antioxidant-rich green tea makes an excellent substitute for a sugary drink habit.



## FOOD SCIENCE

### What the Framingham Heart Study Found

One study mentioned often by defenders of the cholesterol theory is the Framingham Heart Study. This long-running research study started back in 1948 and monitored heart disease in more than 5,000 residents of Framingham, Massachusetts. After following up for 16 years, the researchers claimed to find a direct correlation between heart disease and cholesterol levels.

But God is in the details. As it turned out, the group of Framingham residents who developed heart disease and the group of Framingham residents who didn’t had similar ranges of cholesterol levels. In fact, the average cholesterol level of the heart disease group was only 11 percent higher than that of the group without heart disease. Cardiovascular disease struck people with cholesterol levels as low as 150 mg/dL. Low cholesterol, according to this study, was hardly a guarantee of a healthy heart.

When researchers went back and looked at the Framingham data 30 years after the project started, they found that once men passed the age of 47, it didn’t make a whit of difference whether their cholesterol was low or high. Those with high cholesterol at age 48 lived just as long as, or longer than, those who had low cholesterol. So if cholesterol is important only for the relatively few who have had a heart attack before the age of 48, why are the rest of us worried about high-fat food and cholesterol levels?

The question is hardly academic. In 1992, 44 years after the Framingham study began, study director William Castelli wrote the following in an editorial in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*: “In Framingham, Massachusetts, the more saturated fat one ate, the more cholesterol one ate, the more calories one ate, the *lower* the person’s serum cholesterol...we found that people who ate the most cholesterol, ate the most saturated fat, [and] ate the most calories weighed the least and were the most physically active.”

## Cholesterol's Crucial Role in Our Bodies

Despite cholesterol's negative reputation, our bodies can't function without it. It's found in every single cell and is so essential that the lion's share of the cholesterol in our bodies is actually made by the liver, which produces this fatty, waxy substance precisely because it is so essential to the health of our cells. The cholesterol we eat has a minimal effect on our blood levels of cholesterol: If you eat less cholesterol, your liver will simply take up the slack and make more. If you eat more of it, the liver makes less.

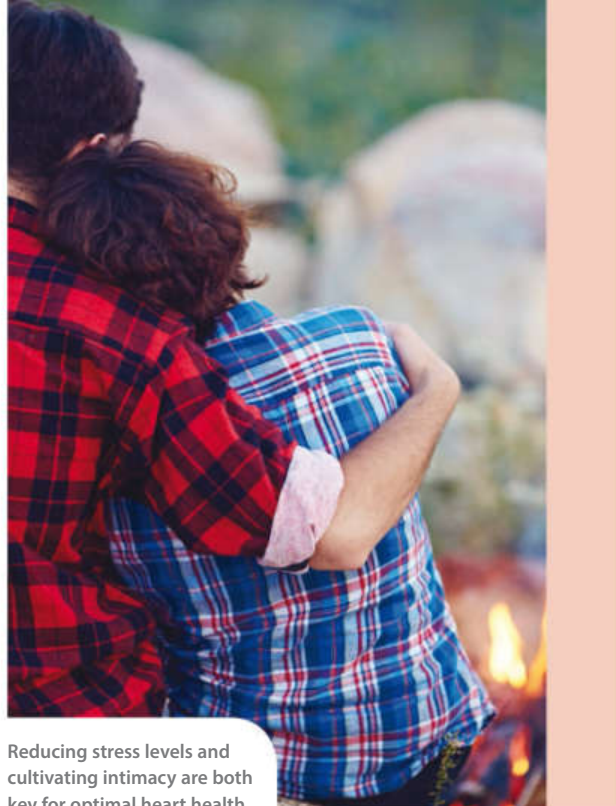
Cholesterol is the basic raw material that our bodies make into vitamin D; sex hormones such as estrogen, progesterone and testosterone; and the bile acids needed for digestion. The emphasis on lowering cholesterol as much as possible is not only misguided but also dangerous. Studies show that those at the lowest end of the cholesterol spectrum have a significantly increased risk of death from myriad conditions and situations unrelated to heart disease, including, but not limited to, cancer, suicide and accidents. Accidents and suicides? Really? Yes.

Here's the connection: We need cholesterol to make brain cells. A low cholesterol level (around 160 mg/dL) has been linked with depression, aggression and cerebral hemorrhages. The membranes of our cells contain a lot of cholesterol because it helps maintain their integrity and facilitates cellular communication. Essentially, we need cholesterol for memory. Lower cholesterol too much and it can promote a kind of global amnesia; with too little cholesterol in the cell membranes, nerve transmission can be affected. It's no surprise that Duane Graveline—a former flight surgeon and astronaut who received international recognition for his research on zero gravity deconditioning—gave his book about the memory loss he experienced after taking statin (cholesterol-lowering) drugs the ominous title, *Lipitor: Thief of Memory*.

Cholesterol is also one of the important weapons our bodies use to fight infections. It helps neutralize toxins produced by bacteria that swarm into the bloodstream from the gut when the immune system is weakened. When you have an infection, the total blood level of cholesterol goes up, but HDL (which we'll define in a moment) falls because it's being used up in the fight. Cholesterol's ability to fight toxins may be one reason why it's found at the site of arterial injuries caused by inflammation. But blaming cholesterol for those injuries is a little like blaming firemen for the fire.

### "Good" and "Bad" Cholesterol: A Completely Outdated Concept

Now here's an interesting fact of which you might not have been aware: It's actually impossible to measure cholesterol directly in the bloodstream. Being a fatty substance, cholesterol is not soluble in water or blood.



Reducing stress levels and cultivating intimacy are both key for optimal heart health.

So how does it get in the bloodstream? Simple. Our livers coat it with a "protein wrapper" and bundle it with a few other substances (such as triglycerides); packaging it in this protective shell allows it to enter the circulatory system, much like stones would float in the ocean if they were contained in a buoyant, waterproof container. In our case, the protein wrapper acts like a passport, allowing cholesterol to travel throughout the bloodstream. It's these packages, known as lipoproteins, that we actually measure when we measure our cholesterol levels. We know these cholesterol-protein combinations as HDL (high-density lipoprotein) and LDL (low-density lipoprotein). Both contain cholesterol and triglycerides, but the percentages are different, and the two types of lipoproteins have different functions in the body. LDL, known as "bad" cholesterol, carries cholesterol to the cells that need it, while HDL, known as "good" cholesterol, picks up the excess and carries it back to the liver.

But this idea of "good" and "bad" cholesterol is a wholly outdated concept. We now know that there are many subtypes of both HDL and LDL, and they do very different things. LDL, the imprecisely named "bad" cholesterol, has several subtypes, and not all of them are bad at all—quite the contrary.

The most important subtypes of LDL are subtype A and subtype B. When most of your LDL is of the "A" type, you're said to have a "pattern A" cholesterol profile. When most of your LDL is of the "B" type, you're said to have a "pattern B" cholesterol profile. Subtype A is a big, fluffy molecule that looks like a cotton ball and does just about as much damage, which is to say none. Subtype B, however, is small, hard and dense, like a BB gun pellet. It's the real bad actor in the system because it's the one that becomes oxidized, sticks to arterial walls and starts a cascade of damage. Subtype B

particles (what we might call the “bad” bad cholesterol) are atherogenic, meaning they contribute significantly to heart disease. As we’ve already noted, big, fluffy LDL particles (the “good” bad cholesterol) are benign. Knowing you have a “high” LDL level is a useless piece of information unless you know how much of that LDL is the small, dense kind (harmful) and how much is the big, fluffy kind (not harmful in the least). A high LDL number with the bulk of it composed of the big, harmless, cotton ball-type molecules (the pattern A distribution) is far preferable to a lower LDL number mostly composed of the BB gun pellet-type molecules (the pattern B distribution).

Unfortunately, most doctors are behind the times on this one. They look at that total LDL number—not the size and type—and if that number is even slightly higher than the lab says it should be, out comes the prescription pad. Pharmaceutical companies love when advisory committees—often heavily stacked with doctors who have financial ties to pharmaceutical companies—recommend that we maintain lower and lower LDL levels because that means a bigger market for cholesterol-lowering drugs. Sadly, most doctors do not perform the easily available tests—often covered by insurance (read more on page 55)—that determine LDL makeup.

Meanwhile, HDL, the so-called “good” cholesterol, isn’t necessarily all good. A study published in the December 2008 issue of *The FASEB Journal*, produced by the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology, challenged the conventional wisdom that simply having high levels of good cholesterol (HDL) and low levels of bad cholesterol (LDL) is necessary for good health. The researchers showed that even good cholesterol has varying degrees of quality and that some HDL cholesterol is actually bad news in terms of overall health.

“For many years, HDL has been viewed as good cholesterol and has generated a false perception that the more HDL in the blood, the better,” says lead researcher Angelo Scanu of the University of Chicago. “It is now apparent that subjects with high HDL levels are not necessarily protected from heart problems and should ask their doctors to find out whether their HDL is good or bad.” Scanu’s study found that the HDL of people with chronic diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis and diabetes is quite different than the HDL of healthy individuals, even when their blood levels of HDL are similar. Normal, “good” HDL cholesterol reduces inflammation; dysfunctional, “bad” HDL does not. “This is yet one more line of research that explains why some people can have perfect cholesterol levels, but still develop cardiovascular disease,” says Gerald Weissmann, editor-in-chief of *The FASEB Journal*. “Just as the discovery of good and bad cholesterol rewrote the book on cholesterol management, the realization that some of the ‘good cholesterol’ is actually bad will do the same.”

The point is that there is, indeed, “bad” cholesterol—even “ultra-bad” cholesterol—but simply using a shotgun pharmaceutical approach to lowering all cholesterol doesn’t accomplish anything and has significant unwanted side effects.

## | WHOLESOME FOOD |

# Eat for Heart Health

### ELIMINATE THESE FOODS

- \* Sugar and soda
- \* Processed carbs (such as white bread, white pasta, crackers and white rice)
- \* Trans fats and excess vegetable oils
- \* Processed meats (such as bacon, ham, hot dogs, bratwurst and most sausages)

### EAT MORE OF THESE FOODS

- \* Wild salmon
- \* Berries and cherries
- \* Grass-fed meat
- \* Vegetables
- \* Nuts
- \* Beans
- \* Dark chocolate
- \* Garlic and turmeric
- \* Pomegranate juice, green tea and red wine
- \* Extra virgin olive oil

### MAKE THESE LIFESTYLE CHANGES TO REDUCE STRESS

- \* Meditate or practice deep breathing
- \* Express your emotions
- \* Play
- \* Cultivate intimacy and pleasure
- \* And most of all...enjoy your life!





Research into the diets of the Mediterranean region has shown that eating cholesterol-rich foods is not necessarily harmful to health.

### The Sugar Lobby in Action

Let's go back for a moment to the British doctor John Yudkin, who examined Keys' Seven Countries Study. Yudkin looked at fat as a percentage of calories. He looked at different types of fats. He even looked at the roles of carbohydrates and protein. And instead of confirming Keys' hypothesis, Yudkin's much more comprehensive data showed that the single dietary factor that had the strongest association with coronary heart disease was—wait for it—sugar.

So how did fat get demonized while sugar got a get-out-of-jail-free card? Well, there's no political lobby for "fat," but there's a powerful one for sugar. In 2003, the World Health Organization (WHO) published a conservative report called "Diet, Nutrition and the Prevention of Chronic Diseases." In it, the WHO made the unexceptional statement that it would be a good idea for people to derive no more than 10 percent of their daily calories from "added sugars," meaning sugar beyond what we might naturally obtain from fruits and vegetables.

The report suggested that people could lower their risk of obesity, diabetes and heart disease simply by curbing some of the sugar they were consuming. Who could possibly object?

Well, the U.S. sugar industry, for one. "Hoping to block the report...The Sugar Association threatened to lobby Congress to cut off the \$406 million the United States gives annually to the WHO," reported Juliet Eilperin in *The Washington Post*. Two senators wrote a letter to then Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy G. Thompson, urg-

ing him to squelch the report. Not long afterward, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services submitted comments on the report, stating that "evidence that soft drinks are associated with obesity is not compelling."

### What's So Bad About a Little Sugar?

The way sugar damages the heart can be directly related to insulin resistance. Ordinary table sugar, technically known as sucrose, is composed of equal parts glucose and fructose, two simple sugars that are anything but metabolically equal. Glucose can be used by any cell in the body. Fructose, on the other hand, is metabolic poison.

Before you point the finger of blame exclusively at high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS), an additive that's made it into virtually every processed food on the market, know that sugar and high-fructose corn syrup are essentially the same thing. Fructose is the damaging part of sugar, and whether

It's worth pointing out that every bad thing fructose does to increase our risk for heart disease—and it does a lot—has virtually nothing to do with elevated cholesterol.

you get that fructose from regular sugar or from HFCS doesn't make a whit of difference. It's the fructose in each of them that's causing the damage, and here's why.

Fructose and glucose are metabolized in the body in completely different ways. Glucose goes into the bloodstream and then into the cells, but fructose goes right to the liver. Research has shown that fructose is seven times more likely to form artery-damaging advanced glycation end products. Fructose is metabolized by the body like fat, and it turns into fat (triglycerides) almost immediately. Fructose is the major cause of fat accumulation in the liver, a condition called fatty liver. And there is a direct link between fatty liver and insulin resistance.

Fructose found in whole foods such as fruits, however, is a different story. There's not all that much fructose in, for example, an apple, and the apple comes with a hefty dose of fiber, which slows the rate of carbohydrate absorption and reduces insulin response. But fructose extracted from fruit, concentrated into a syrup, and then inserted into practically every food we buy at the supermarket—from bread and hamburger buns to pretzels and cereals—well, that's a whole different animal.

Since the introduction of high-fructose corn syrup to food manufacturing in the 1970s, our fructose consumption has skyrocketed. Today, 25 percent of adolescents consume 15 percent of their calories from fructose alone. As endocrinologist Robert Lustig points out in a brilliant lecture, “Sugar: The Bitter Truth” (available on YouTube), the percentage of calories from fat in the American diet has gone down at the same time that fructose consumption has skyrocketed, along with heart disease, diabetes, obesity and hypertension. Coincidence? Lustig doesn’t think so, and neither do we.

Metabolic syndrome is a collection of symptoms—high triglycerides, abdominal fat, hypertension and insulin resistance—that seriously increases the risk for heart disease. Rodents consuming large amounts of fructose rapidly develop it. In humans, a high-fructose diet raises triglycerides almost instantly; the rest of the symptoms associated with metabolic syndrome take longer to develop in humans than they do in rats, but develop they do.

All told, the case against fructose consumption as a key factor in the development of heart disease seems to be far more cogent than the case against fat. It’s also worth pointing out that every single bad thing fructose does to increase our risk for heart disease—and it does a lot—has virtually nothing to do with elevated cholesterol. The fact is that sugar is far more damaging to the heart than either fat or cholesterol, but that has never stopped the diet establishment from continuing to stick to its story that fat and cholesterol are what we ought to be worried about.

As the old journalistic maxim goes, “Never let the facts get in the way of a good story.” Unfortunately, this story is long past its expiration date. Sticking to it in the face of all evidence continues to make many people very sick indeed.

This article is excerpted from the book *The Great Cholesterol Myth* by Jonny Bowden and Stephen Sinatra. This book is full of more information about cholesterol, the background of how it became demonized in American dietary guidelines, research on the dangers of statin drugs and much more. A must-read for anyone concerned with their cholesterol levels or heart health, this book is available for purchase on page 88.



Dark chocolate that contains 70 percent cocoa has much less sugar than other sweets, plus it’s packed with antioxidants.

#### | GOOD TO KNOW |

## Cholesterol Testing 101

If your doctor is concerned about your cholesterol levels, doctors Jonny Bowden and Stephen Sinatra recommend you ask about the following tests, which are more important than the standard test for cholesterol:

**\* LDL PARTICLE SIZE:** Measures whether your LDL particles are mostly type A, the large, fluffy, benign kind; or mostly type B, the small, dense kind that cause inflammation (one common test is the NMR LipoProfile; others include the Lipoprint, Berkely, VAP and LPP)

**\* HS-CRP:** Measures CRP, a marker for inflammation directly associated with cardiovascular health; an optimal level is less than 0.8 mg/dL

**\* FIBRINOGEN:** Measures the levels of a protein that determines blood’s ability to clot properly; normal levels are between 200 and 400 mg/dL

**\* SERUM FERRITIN (IRON):** Tests for iron overload, which can contribute to heart disease; optimal levels are less than 80 mg/L for women and less than 90 mg/L for men

**\* LP(A):** Elevated Lp(a) levels are a very serious risk factor for heart attacks

**\* HOMOCYSTEINE:** Elevated levels of homocysteine strongly predict first and recurring cardiovascular incidents; optimal levels are between 7 and 9 umol/L

**\* INTERLEUKIN-6:** Elevated interleukin-6 levels are a precursor to elevated CRP levels; optimal levels are between 0.0 and 12.0 pg/mL

**\* CORONARY CALCIUM SCAN:** Measures coronary calcification; a score above 400 is considered extensive and a risk factor for coronary procedures and events



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# An Old-Fashioned *Holiday*

Enjoy this roundup of recipes, crafts and activities to help create a fun holiday season filled with the warmth of loved ones and tradition.

*With its cold weather and long nights,*

the holiday season has long been a time when families spend more evenings together, gathered around the warmth of the fire, finding ways to while away the hours. Many traditional activities for this time of year also served a purpose for our forebears: Baking makes heating the home productive; warming drinks and spices help our bodies stay comfortable; and slowing down lets us rest and recharge as the year comes to an end. Although electric lights, televisions, computers, smartphones and video games make it easy today to overcome the potential hardships of this time of year, you might find it does your health some good to honor this portion of nature's cycle. Consider these old-fashioned recipes, activities and gift ideas to make your holiday hearken to our shared human history, and to spend some quality time with your loved ones while enjoying the traditional tastes, scents and pastimes of the season.



## Mulling Spices

'Tis the season for the toasty, comforting scents and flavors of aromatic mulling spices, including cinnamon, cloves, allspice and star anise. The hot drinks served up this time of year are deeply satisfying, and folks who live in cold, northern climates have been coming up with ways to serve spiced beverages for centuries. There's just no getting away from the comfort of sharing big bowls of spicy ales and punches.

My favorite story of spiced wassail involves the indigenous populations of southern England. In the apple-growing, cider-producing parts of Medieval Britain, the winter cider celebrations were a way to celebrate the health of the apple trees. One folktale tells of the ancient "Apple Tree Man" who resides as a spirit in the oldest tree in the orchard. By offering up the last mug of mulled cider (pouring it over the tree roots), the bounty of the next year's harvest could be expected. I'll raise a mug to that!

These mulling spices work great with apple cider, wine or other festive drinks. It can also be boiled on the stovetop as a nice spicy potpourri. A gift basket including a bag of spices along with fresh apple cider or a bottle of red wine makes a wonderful gift, indeed. Print the following drink recipes onto lovely cards to go along with it.

—KORI RODLEY, MOUNTAIN ROSE HERBS



Most traditional mulling spices are also among the world's best sources of antioxidants.

### MULLING SPICE MIX

- 4 whole nutmeg
- ½ cup cardamom pods
- ½ cup sweet cinnamon chips
- ¼ cup each: orange peel, lemon peel, ginger root, whole cloves, whole allspice berries
- 2 organic vanilla beans, insides scraped
- Star anise, whole pods (optional)
- Sweet cinnamon sticks (optional)

1. Put nutmeg and cardamom in a cloth bag and whack with a rolling pin to break into pieces.
2. In a bowl, combine nutmeg and cardamom pieces, cinnamon chips, orange and lemon peel, ginger root, cloves and allspice berries. Add inside of vanilla beans (save vanilla pods for homemade vanilla extract or to infuse honey).

This makes about 2½ cups—enough for several recipes. For an individual serving, put ¼ cup in a cotton drawstring bag. Toss in 1 to 2 star anise pods or cinnamon sticks per bag, if you like.

### MULLED WINE

- 1 bottle red wine of your choice
- 1¼ cup mulling spices (at left)
- ½ cup elderberry syrup (or substitute fresh orange or pineapple juice)
- ½ cup brandy (optional)

Pour wine in a large saucepan. (If using fruit juice, add to wine now.) Toss in mulling spices and extra cinnamon sticks, if desired. Heat over medium heat until steaming with little bubbles forming around the edges. Reduce heat to low, cover and let simmer about 20 minutes. Remove lid, remove mulling spice bag, and add elderberry syrup and brandy (if using). Stir well. Serve with a slice of orange and a cinnamon stick, if desired. Serves 4 to 6.



These recipes were supplied by Mountain Rose Herbs, one of our favorite suppliers of organic herbs and herbal teas. To find these recipes and another for a Mulled Orange Tea Hot Toddy, visit [mountainroseblog.com/make-mulling-spice-recipe](http://mountainroseblog.com/make-mulling-spice-recipe).

### MULLED CIDER

- 6 cups fresh apple cider
- ¼ cup pure maple syrup (optional)
- 1¼ cup mulling spices (at left)
- Organic cinnamon sticks and freshly grated nutmeg, for garnish (optional)

Pour apple cider into large pan. I tend to think fresh apple cider has just the right sweetness, but if you'd like a little more, add maple syrup and stir well. Toss in mulling spices and gently heat on medium for 20 minutes or so until very hot. Remove from heat and ladle into mugs, adding a cinnamon stick and a scratch or two of freshly grated nutmeg for garnish, if you wish. Serves 6.

# Gingerbread House

Few things are more fun and traditional at the holidays than building a gingerbread house. This is a great activity for kids and adults alike, and between making the gingerbread, cutting out the templates, creating the houses and munching on them later, it can provide a week's worth of holiday entertainment. You'll find plenty of printable templates online by searching "gingerbread house templates." Try this recipe for delectable gingerbread and construction-worthy icing. Share pics of your creations with us on Instagram and tag us (@motherearthliving) or use the hashtag #motherearthliving.

## OLD-FASHIONED GINGERBREAD

This dough may be refrigerated for up to a week. If you have extra dough, cut cookie shapes to feed your building crew.

- 8 cups flour**
- 1½ teaspoons baking soda**
- 1½ teaspoons baking powder**
- 1½ teaspoons salt**
- 1½ teaspoons ground cloves**
- 1½ teaspoons nutmeg**
- 1 tablespoon ground ginger**
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon**
- ½ teaspoon ground pepper (optional)**
- 2½ sticks butter, softened**
- 1 cup brown sugar, loosely packed**
- 3 eggs**
- 2 cups unsulfured molasses**

- 1.** Sift together flour, baking soda, baking powder, salt and spices. Set aside.
- 2.** With an electric mixer, cream together butter and brown sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs and molasses.
- 3.** Add ⅓ of the flour mixture and beat on slow speed until combined, then add the remainder of the flour mixture in 2 batches, beating after each addition. Chill dough at least 1 hour.
- 4.** Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
- 5.** Roll dough between 2 sheets of baking parchment until it's ⅛-inch-thick. Remove top sheet of parchment. Using cardboard templates, cut out house pieces.
- 6.** Transfer pieces, still on parchment, to an ungreased baking sheet. Bake for 15 minutes or until slightly brown along the edges and firm to the touch. Let pieces cool on baking sheet, about 20 minutes. While they're still warm, check their shape with the appropriate template and trim with a sharp knife if necessary. Let pieces set overnight.



## CONSTRUCTION ICING

This is a thick, construction-worthy icing. It may be thinned with water for use in decorating the house.

- 6 large egg whites**
- 10 cups sifted confectioners' sugar, divided**

With an electric mixer, beat egg whites on low speed until frothy. Add ½ cup sugar and beat for another minute. Add remaining sugar in 4 batches and beat on high speed for 5 to 10 minutes or until the mixture holds a stiff peak and is as thick as toothpaste. Keep icing in a covered bowl until ready to use, then beat gently for 1 minute before using.

## | MORE IDEAS |

### Cookie Delivery

To deliver holiday cookies in adorable containers, consider making any of the simple cookie gift bags from the blog Spoon Fork Bacon. Bloggers Teri Lyn Fisher and Jenny Park offer a variety of cookie gift bag plans, each made with simple craft-store materials and accompanied by cute printable labels. Find them at [spoonforkbacon.com/2012/12/lets-make-some-cookie-gifts](http://spoonforkbacon.com/2012/12/lets-make-some-cookie-gifts).



## IN THE KITCHEN

### Peppernuts

Popular as a holiday treat in Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands, *pfeffernüsse* (or peppernuts) are spice-laden tiny cookies perfect to make in a huge batch and give as gifts. These crunchy, spicy cookies hold up perfectly in the freezer, so you can make them ahead of time and your recipients can save them for after the holiday sweets binge is over if they wish. Not overly sweet and filled with some of the world's healthiest spices, including cinnamon and cloves, these flavorful cookies make a perfectly Old World holiday treat. This recipe was provided by Kristin Hoffman, whose blog Baker Bettie shares tons of recipes, basic baking tips and beautiful pictures. Visit her at [bakerbettie.com](http://bakerbettie.com).

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>1 cup unsalted butter, softened</b>    | <b>½ teaspoon baking soda</b>             |
| <b>1 cup dark brown sugar</b>             | <b>1 teaspoon freshly ground cardamom</b> |
| <b>1 large egg</b>                        | <b>½ teaspoon ground cinnamon</b>         |
| <b>1 cup almonds, finely ground</b>       | <b>½ teaspoon white pepper</b>            |
| <b>2¾ cups all-purpose flour, divided</b> | <b>½ teaspoon ground cloves</b>           |
| <b>1 teaspoon baking powder</b>           | <b>½ teaspoon ground allspice</b>         |
|   | <b>½ teaspoon ground nutmeg</b>           |

1. In a large bowl, cream butter and sugar using an electric mixer. Add egg and ground almonds.
2. In another bowl, mix 2½ cups flour with baking powder, baking soda, cardamom, cinnamon, pepper, cloves, allspice and nutmeg.
3. Blend dry ingredients into creamed mixture until a stiff dough forms. If the dough is too wet, add more flour, 1 tablespoon at a time, until it forms a stiff dough that is easy to roll.
4. Shape dough into a ball. I think it's easier to roll out the dough if it's chilled. Put in refrigerator for 1 hour or freezer for 15 minutes.
5. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
6. Cut off a portion of dough at a time and roll between your hands and a lightly floured work surface to make slim ropes about ½ inch thick. Place 4 or 5 ropes on an ungreased cookie sheet. Cut ropes into ½-inch pieces using a sharp, small knife. Separate pieces.
7. Bake for 8 minutes or until cookies are lightly browned and dry.

Remove from oven; cool on baking sheet.

8. Store in an airtight container for up to a month. Makes about 600 tiny cookies.



### Mexican Hot Chocolate

Hot chocolate is a must-have after a sledding or snowman-making session. And no culinary tradition does hot chocolate better than Mexico's. Mexican hot chocolate is rich and delicious with hints of cinnamon and cayenne pepper. On her blog Munchin with Munchkin, Christine Mullen shares this recipe, which makes the perfect gift when packaged in Mason jars and accompanied with the very simple preparation instructions. Visit her at [munchinwithmunchkin.com](http://munchinwithmunchkin.com). *Viva el chocolate!*

- |  |
|--|
| <b>3 cups nonfat dry milk powder</b>   |
| <b>1¾ cups powdered sugar</b>          |
| <b>¼ cup brown sugar</b>               |
| <b>1½ cups cocoa powder</b>            |
| <b>¾ cup white chocolate chips</b>     |
| <b>¾ cup semisweet chocolate chips</b> |
| <b>¼ teaspoon salt</b>                 |
| <b>2 teaspoons cornstarch</b>          |
| <b>½ teaspoon cinnamon</b>             |
| <b>¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper</b>       |

1. In a large bowl, whisk together all ingredients. In batches, pulse mixture in a food processor until smooth and well combined. Store in a sealed container in a dry, dark place.
2. To make hot chocolate, put ½ cup mixture into a mug and mix with hot water or milk. Top with marshmallows and a sprinkle of cinnamon.



## Upcycled Advent Calendar

An advent calendar is a fun and traditional way to make the whole holiday season exciting, as kids (or kids at heart!) get the joy of opening a small package each day of December leading up to the holiday. Alex shares this adorable upcycled advent calendar she made with recycled toilet paper rolls on her blog Northstory, where she shares ideas about projects and crafts as well as fashion, daily life and product reviews. Find the full project and many more: [northstory.ca/diy-advent-calendar](http://northstory.ca/diy-advent-calendar).

To make the calendar, Alex took 24 saved toilet paper rolls, pinched the edges to close them and filled them with little treats or toys (she used mostly Halloween candy leftovers). Then she decorated them with last year's holiday ribbon, stamped a number for each day on a key tag, and attached them all to a piece of foam core. Here are a few tips she learned along the way.

➡ Use strong double-sided tape or a glue gun to attach the boxes to the foam core.

➡ Depending how you wrap your ribbon, finish it (attach the ends of it after you wrap it around the box) with a glue gun and not tape (unless you can do some fancy tying).

➡ Do not use heavy, clunky sweets or toys. Lighter and thinner is better. It's common sense but it's amazing what you can overlook, especially

when you're cramming two in each box for both of your kids. I could have made two separate calendars but...oh, come on.

➡ When your kids take off the box, have them put up a sticker, small ornament or make their own small festive drawing over the spot so you're not stuck with a ripped spot or some glue.

➡ There. Now you can make sure that your family doesn't throw away all your toilet paper rolls, either.



## CONSIDER THIS

### The Ultimate Tradition

Giving back to our fellow humans is the ultimate holiday tradition.

#### COOKIES FOR KIDS' CANCER

[cookiesforkidscancer.org](http://cookiesforkidscancer.org)

Founded by the parents of a pediatric cancer patient, this organization allows supporters all over the U.S. to host holiday bake sales. Money is donated to five of the nation's leading pediatric cancer centers.

#### HEIFER INTERNATIONAL

[heifer.org](http://heifer.org)

This charity supports nutrition and self-reliance by giving impoverished people around the world livestock. They then pass along the gift by sharing animals' offspring with other community members.

#### FEEDING AMERICA'S HUNGRY CHILDREN

[feedingahc.org](http://feedingahc.org)

The Feeding America's Hungry Children network of regional food banks and food-rescue organizations serves 16 states, distributing food to about 100 local charitable hunger relief agencies.

#### UNITED WAY ADOPT-A-FAMILY

[unitedway.org](http://unitedway.org)

Contact your local United Way branch to form a group to adopt a family, providing those in need with food and gifts to celebrate the holiday season.

#### NO KID HUNGRY

[nokidhungry.org](http://nokidhungry.org)

The No Kid Hungry network aims to partner kids with effective nutrition programs, to empower low-income families to prepare healthy food, and to shine a spotlight on the crisis of child hunger in America.

## CRAFTS & DÉCOR



*Knit Wit* Knitting is a great way to pass a long winter's night, and it yields useful scarves, hats, mittens and sweaters. Learning this craft isn't hard, and it provides a hobby and a source for gift-giving for years to come. Check out these handy resources.

**CRAFT YARN COUNCIL**  
[craftyarncouncil.com](http://craftyarncouncil.com)

Instructions, classes and more

**THE KNITTING ANSWER BOOK**  
by Margaret Radcliffe  
Solutions to every problem you'll ever face, available on page 88

**GOODKNITKISSES**  
[youtube.com/goodknitkisses](http://youtube.com/goodknitkisses)  
A variety of knitting how-to videos

**LANTERN MOON**  
[lanternmoon.com](http://lanternmoon.com)  
Eco-friendly yarns, needles, gifts and more

**ORGANIC COTTON PLUS**  
[organiccottonplus.com](http://organiccottonplus.com)  
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## DIY Fresh Wreath

The making of wreaths is an ancient art that began about 1,000 years before the birth of Christ. The wreath symbolizes the strength of life overcoming the forces of winter. In ancient Rome, people used wreaths as a sign of victory and celebration. The use of evergreens and wreaths as symbols of life was an ancient custom of the Egyptians, Chinese and Hebrews, among other people.



The use of evergreens for Christmas wreaths probably arose in northern Europe, Italy and Spain in the early 19th century. In the early days in Europe, people put wreaths on their doors to identify their homes in the same manner house numbers are used today. Each house would have a unique wreath made of plants most likely grown by the homeowner. Making your own wreath isn't difficult, and it makes for a lovely afternoon if you gather friends to share in wreath-making and a cup of mulled wine or cider. These simple instructions were adapted from the blog Girl. Inspired., which offers craft projects, sewing tutorials, recipes and party ideas. Check it out at [thegirlinspired.com](http://thegirlinspired.com).

### MATERIALS

**Garden clippers**

**Evergreen branches**

**Wire wreath form (ideally with clips)**

**Wire**

**Pinecones**

**Berries/fruit**

**1.** Cut 3 evergreen twigs 6 to 9 inches long. Stack twigs, fluffiest on the bottom. Place bundle on wreath form, with the base under the clip, pointed right. (We're working counter-clockwise.) Bend down clip, or attach bundle with wire.

**2.** If you're using decorative elements (pinecones and fruit or berries), group those into sets. I made 3 clusters, each with 3 pinecones and 1 berry sprig. (My horticulturist mother taught me plants always look good in groups of 3.) If you collect pinecones from the yard, wrap wire around their centers to secure them in clusters.

**3.** Gather your next bundle of branches and place it into the next clip, or wire it slightly overlapping the first. Make sure the tops of your second bundle cover the base/wires of the first. If you're adding decorative elements, wire those groupings to some of the evergreen bundles and distribute the bundles with decorations evenly around the wreath.

**4.** Continue adding evergreen bundles until you get to your last clip. Make sure the last bundle overlaps the wires of the first. Hold up your wreath. Check that all the branches look even, and add to any sparse spaces. Attach a ribbon to hang the wreath and put that beauty up!

## Tiny Gifts

Do you have old holiday cards you don't know what to do with? Transform them into tiny boxes, perfect for little gifts or to use as decorations, whether on the Christmas tree or stacked in a bowl. Visit [motherearthliving.com/tiny-gift-boxes](http://motherearthliving.com/tiny-gift-boxes) for instructions.





## The True History of Mistletoe

This is the true story of mistletoe—how it evolved to hang on trees and eventually above our doors. The ancestor of all mistletoe is the most ancient sandalwood. Sandalwood trees are parasites; their specialized roots sink like small spears into the roots of larger trees and suck water, sugar and nutrients from them. Mistletoe is a common name for several independent lineages descended from sandalwood. Mistletoe developed the ability to grow not on the roots of trees, but instead on their branches, gaining the same nutrients, water and sugars, but also a foothold up into the sky.

As trees clambered for the sun, the mistletoe simply rode up on their branches, living off the trees' nutrients and the energy it could gather from the sun. The transition from root parasite to parasite of shoots was so successful that mistletoe diversified and spread around the world. But while theirs was a life with advantages, it also offered new challenges. One was how to colonize trees in the first place. Unaided, the seeds of mistletoe would fall to the ground, unable to get to branches. So mistletoe evolved seeds surrounded by berries. The berries attracted birds that ate the berries and then, as they flew, or better yet, when they landed, pooped. If everything went perfectly, the poop landed on a branch where the seed might germinate.

So while there are many cultural explanations for why humans tend to kiss under mistletoe, the evolutionary story of these plants is more interesting. Mistletoe is a measure of how many of the fruits in our daily lives, be they literal or figurative, depend on other species. Mistletoe depends on its tree and its bird, just as we depend on thousands of species ourselves, species such as trees and birds, but also our crops, our Christmas trees and so many more, each of which evolved among evolution's wild attempts to turn nonlife—sun, soil, water and air—into life. I will pucker my lips to that, to the way evolution clings to us as beautifully as the kiss of a sticky seed.

—Rob Dunn; reprinted with permission from *Smithsonian* magazine, [smithsonianmag.com](http://smithsonianmag.com).

### A MISTLETOE KISSING BALL

Mistletoe over the doorway makes a playful reference to Christmas past. Make this simple and adorable craft with the stems of greenery you collect on a winter walk.

#### TOOLS

Needle-nose pliers

Craft scissors

#### MATERIALS

6-inch floral-foam ball

Roughly 75 (3-inch) mistletoe stems (pine and fir can be substituted or added)

Roughly 50 to 60 (3-inch) rosemary stems (thyme can be substituted)

15 French lavender stems

12 inches florists' wire or 24-gauge wire

Small bell (optional)

30 inches ribbon

Note: If mistletoe or rosemary stems are substituted for other herbs or shrubs, take into account their size and adjust the number of clippings accordingly.

1. Soak floral-foam ball in water.
2. Cut herbs and shrubbery into roughly 3-inch pieces at an angle.
3. Remove floral-foam ball from water and place on a towel. The ball should be moist but not dripping.
4. Using needle-nose pliers, cut 2 inches of wire. Twist a loop at end of wire.
5. Thread wire through center of floral-foam ball until wire loop is touching ball. Measuring 3 inches from ball, string bell onto wire and make another wrap loop as in step 4. (It is essential that the loop be made at the 3-inch mark to ensure bell's visibility once the ball is covered in clippings.) The floral-foam ball should be secure between the 2 wire loops, without any room to move.
6. String ribbon through first wrap loop made and tie ends together in a small bow.
7. Stick mistletoe, rosemary and lavender stems into floral-foam ball, evenly distributing herbs. Make sure each stem is securely lodged in floral-foam ball.
8. Gently move bow so it sits on top of ball.

## Make a Simple Festive Garland

Creating an elegantly decorated home is simple when you use rustic items that lend an air of nostalgia to your home. This easy-to-make garland comes from the blog of Vanessa Pleasants and Jana Roach, who run the annual Vintage Whites Market in Somers, Montana, and Salt Lake City. Visit them for items and inspiration at [vintagewhitesblog.com](http://vintagewhitesblog.com).

Christmas is such a busy time of year, but it's also our favorite time to decorate with unique items. We love ideas that pair simplicity with a stunning result. In this project, we used thick rope to create a garland. It's simple, and the supplies—festive fake fruit and collected real greenery—are oh-so-cheap!

### MATERIALS

**Thick rope**  
**Faux berries**

**Greenery**  
**Festive fruit**

Cut rope to desired length, then trim berries, fruit and greenery until you have enough to cover the garland. Twist the rope so you create spaces between the strands. Stick your embellishments between the strands and let go. Continue up and down the garland until it suits your fancy, and you're done!



## Orange Pomander Balls

Every year as a kid, I would visit a museum in my hometown during the holidays—a restored 1800s mansion. Behind the museum, an 1868 log house showed what life would have been like for settlers and servants on the prairie. At Christmas time, while the main museum was decorated with elaborate trees and décor, the decorations in the cabin were humble but beautiful. One of my most distinct memories is the fragrance of the clove-studded orange pomander balls that decorated the room and scented the air.

The spicy scent of cloves combined with the uplifting aroma of citrus makes pomanders a lovely air freshener for stale winter air, and making them is simple and fun. All you need is a bag of oranges and a cup or so of whole cloves. Put several orange pomander balls in a bowl or string them and hang them in the kitchen or on the Christmas tree. —JESSICA KELLNER

### TIPS FOR MAKING ORANGE POMANDER BALLS

- \* To make it easier to insert the cloves into the orange, start by poking holes around the orange with something sharp such as a nail or skewer.
- \* Make any pattern you like on the orange. You can disperse cloves evenly all over, in a spiral or rings around the orange (hint: a rubber band comes in handy as a guide), or in any other pattern.
- \* Wipe off the orange with a towel, then push cloves into the holes.
- \* To make a hanging version, attach a ribbon by tying it around the pomander and securing with pins or a hot glue gun (mark a spot for the ribbon with masking tape while decorating).
- \* Finally, to prevent molding, before displaying let your pomanders dry for about a week in the refrigerator, or toss them in a bag with orris root powder.

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A close-up photograph of a dark, rustic bowl filled with a mound of bright orange-yellow turmeric powder. The powder has a fine, granular texture. In the background, other bowls containing similar powders are visible but out of focus. The lighting is warm, highlighting the vibrant color of the turmeric.

*The Wonders of*

# Turmeric

This ancient panacea shines under the lens of modern research. Studies have confirmed its ability to ward off brain disease, cancer, digestive disorders and much more.

BY LINDA B. WHITE



## Lance Roehrig couldn't do without turmeric.

When an accident left his partner with a large leg abrasion, the conventional antimicrobial ointment a doctor prescribed didn't heal the wound. Roehrig, a Denver clinical Ayurvedic specialist and instructor for the California College of Ayurveda, substituted a homemade paste composed of powdered turmeric, an herbal formula called triphala, rosewater and a little honey. The wound healed so much faster that, at the next appointment, the doctor advised he continue applying the herbs.

Roehrig counts turmeric as the most important herb in his medicine chest. Why? "It's safe and considered a panacea, one that's helpful for most any condition and for all constitutions," he says. Indeed, practitioners of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Ayurvedic medicine (an ancient Indian healing system) have long recommended turmeric for a variety of ailments, including infectious illnesses, cancer, arthritis, musculoskeletal pain, liver disease and indigestion. Roehrig adds that yogis have long consumed turmeric to help them bend into poses and repair injuries.

Like ginger, turmeric (*Curcuma longa*) is a member of the Zingiberaceae family. This perennial grows in India, Southeast Asia and other tropical regions. Its rhizomes, or fleshy underground stems, are used as a spice (a key ingredient in curry) and medicine. Turmeric's biologically active chemicals include curcuminoids, which produce the yellow pigment, as well as volatile oils, which create the characteristic aroma.

Traditionally, whole turmeric rhizome, dried or fresh, is taken internally or applied topically as powders, pastes and turmeric-infused oils for skin ailments (wounds, inflammation, infection). Most research focuses on extracts concentrated for curcuminoids, particularly curcumin.

"Curcumin has many beneficial pharmacological effects which include, but are not limited to, antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, antidiabetic, anti-cancer, and protection against nervous system diseases such as Alzheimer's disease," says Debasish Bandyopadhyay, an assistant professor of research in the chemistry department at the University of Texas-Pan American in Edinburg, Texas, and the author of a 2014 review paper on curcumin. Here's a snapshot of the research-backed benefits of curcumin.

### ARTHRITIS

Osteoarthritis (OA), which results from wear and tear on joints, commonly accompanies advancing age. At least three studies show curcumin products (specially formulated to enhance bioavailability) taken for two to three months reduce pain, improve function and minimize reliance on pain medications. In two studies of knee OA, curcumin worked on par with ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), the overuse of which can cause stomach upset and intestinal damage. Combining turmeric with other anti-inflammatory herbs, such as boswellia and ginger, also helps improve symptoms.

Curcumin also appears to ameliorate rheumatoid arthritis, an autoimmune disorder. One study compared curcumin with the drug diclofenac (Voltaren) and found curcumin to be more effective.

### CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

In lab studies, curcumin lowers blood levels of cholesterol and triglycerides (blood fats); discourages oxidation of LDL cholesterol (a

chemical reaction that renders this cholesterol more harmful to the arteries); and inhibits platelets, thereby reducing the risk of clots forming within blood vessels. One study found that taking 4 grams of curcuminoids a day for several days before and after coronary artery bypass surgery reduced the risk of in-hospital heart attack.

### INFLAMMATORY BOWEL DISEASE (IBD)

Curcuminoids aren't well absorbed from the intestinal tract, making them potentially useful against bowel inflammation and colon cancer. IBD includes ulcerative colitis (an inflammatory condition of the large intestine) and Crohn's disease (which primarily affects the end of the small intestine and the beginning of the large intestine). When people with ulcerative colitis added curcumin to conventional medication, they extended their time to relapse. When a small group of children and teens 11 to 18 years old with IBD added curcumin to conventional medication, they all tolerated the combo well, and half of them improved significantly.



Turmeric comes from the rhizome. To make it into a spice, the raw turmeric is boiled then dried.

### INDIGESTION & IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME (IBS)

Turmeric reduced indigestion after meals and improved symptoms of IBS, a condition characterized by abdominal pain, gas, bloating, diarrhea and constipation.

### ORAL HEALTH

Turmeric gels and mouthwashes have been recommended to maintain oral health and combat conditions such as gingivitis (gum inflammation). A mouthwash containing turmeric was as effective as a conventional mouthwash (chlorhexidine) at improving gingivitis and reducing bacterial levels in the mouth.

### DIABETES

Curcumin acts in several ways to reduce blood glucose (sugar) levels. In one study, taking curcumin for three months reduced blood glucose in overweight and obese people with type 2 diabetes. In addition, curcumin supplements taken for nine months reduced the risk that people at high risk for type 2 diabetes actually developed the disease.

### INFECTIONS

Turmeric is traditionally used to fight skin infections and dress wounds. Lab research shows a range of antimicrobial effects. In lab studies, curcumin inhibits a number of bacteria (including *Staphylococcus aureus*, *S. epidermidis*, *E. coli* and *Vibrio cholerae*, which causes cholera); viruses (influenza, parainfluenza, herpes simplex virus 1 and 2, respiratory syncytial virus, human papilloma virus, hepatitis B and C viruses); and fungi (*Cryptococcus neoformans*, *Candida albicans* and dermatophytes, a group of fungi that can infect the skin). Test-tube studies show that curcumin has activity against methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) and acts synergistically with several antibiotics. It may, however, interfere with the ability of ciprofloxacin (Cipro) to fight *Salmonella* infections.

Mastitis, or inflammation of the breast, plagues

one-third of breastfeeding women. A topical curcumin cream applied every eight hours for three days significantly eased breast pain and redness in a group of Iranian women with moderately severe mastitis.

### PSORIASIS

In a study of 21 people with moderate-to-severe psoriasis (a condition that causes patches of thickened, red skin with silvery scales), oral turmeric extract augmented visible light phototherapy. In another study, a 1 percent curcumin gel resolved the plaques of psoriasis faster than a conventional drug (calcipotriol).

### BRAIN DISEASES

Compared with the U.S., the occurrence of Alzheimer's disease (AD) is relatively low in India (specifically, 4 percent of people 80 years and older in a region of India versus almost 16 percent in northwestern Pennsylvania), where turmeric is a ubiquitous spice. In lab studies, curcumin inhibits the formation of beta-amyloid (a misshapen protein that gums up the spaces between brain cells in AD). Experiments also suggest that curcumin may help protect against Parkinson's disease and inhibit the growth of brain tumors.

Human brain studies are scarce. In one of the few

conducted, a group of people older than 60 with prediabetes ingested turmeric with breakfast and saw enhanced working memory. (Diabetes and prediabetes increase the risk of cognitive impairment, including reduced memory, problem-solving skills and ability to concentrate.) However, when 30 people with AD consumed 2 or 4 grams a day of curcumin for a year, they didn't get better.

### ANTI-CANCER EFFECTS

This area is a hotbed of curcumin research. "Curcumin possesses immense anti-cancer effects," Bandyopadhyay says. "In a number of lab studies on various types of cancer, it prevents tumor formation, growth, invasion and metastasis [spread through blood and lymph]." It also inhibits the creation of new blood vessels that feed the tumor and stimulates cancer cells to die.

Plus, chemicals in turmeric (curcuminoids and turmerones) enhance immune system function. One of the immune system's jobs, in addition to combating infectious organisms, is to destroy cancer cells.

Lab experiments show combining curcumin with some chemotherapy drugs and radiation treatment improves outcomes. In addition, curcumin may counteract the resistance cancer cells often develop to chemotherapy. Tempering these exciting research findings is the fact that most of the research involves cultures of cancer cells and animals with cancer.

A July 2015 study noted that 12 clinical trials were in progress, mainly in people with colon and pancreatic cancer. Here are highlights from already-published human trials.

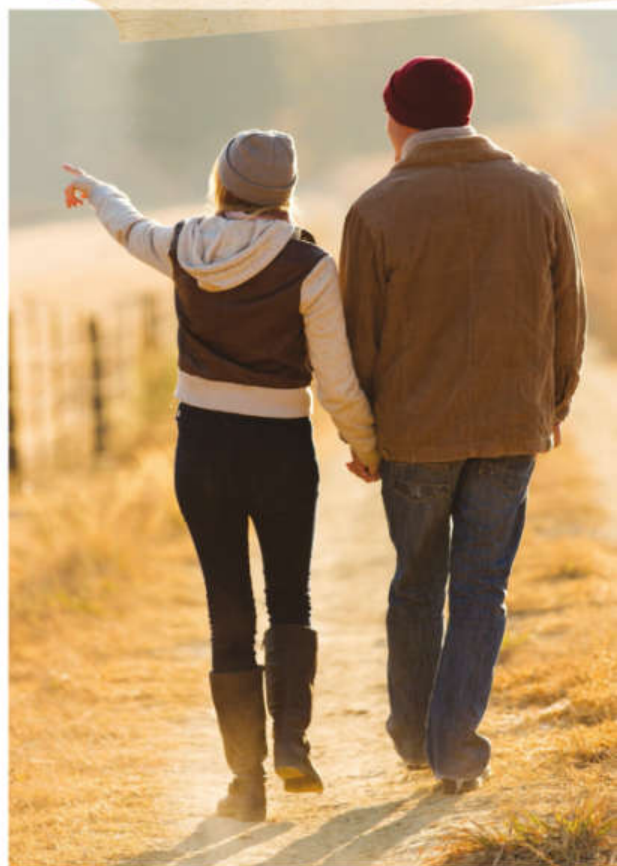
- A study of people at high risk for various cancers found that they tolerated up to 8 grams a day (at which point they started balking at swallowing more capsules). In a number of cases, precancerous lesions improved.
- Supplemental curcumin enhanced quality of life and reduced inflammation in people with a variety of cancers.
- In 160 people with several types of cancer, a relatively low dose of a product with improved bioavailability (Meriva) reduced side effects due to standard chemotherapy or radiation therapy.
- Curcumin supplements may help stabilize disease in people with colon cancer.
- In smokers (a group at risk for cancer of the colon and other sites), 4 grams a day of curcumin significantly reduced precancerous lesions in the colon and rectum.
- A preliminary study in women with advanced breast cancer found up to 6 grams a day of curcumin tolerable in combination with the chemotherapeutic drug docetaxel. Furthermore, the combo produced encouraging results.

### | GOOD TO KNOW |

## How Can One Plant Protect Against So Many Illnesses?

Researchers suspect that turmeric's potent anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties are the key to its ability to protect against so many diseases. Anti-inflammatory agents reduce the inflammation that occurs as the immune system does its job. Antioxidants counter oxidation, a chemical reaction that generates tissue-damaging molecules called free radicals.

Oxidation promotes inflammation and vice versa. Both accelerate aging and underlie most chronic human diseases, including inflammatory bowel disease, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, arthritis and Alzheimer's disease.





## RECIPE

### GOLDEN MILK

Lance Roehrig, a Denver clinical Ayurvedic specialist, has found this time-honored recipe effective at curbing the common cold when taken at the first sniffle. As a preventive, he and his children drink a nightly glass all through the winter. Once a cold sets in, he recommends drinking the milk recipe at night and using water rather than milk during the day.

Note: Curcumin doesn't dissolve into water. Milk (as well as most Indian dishes) contains fat, which increases intestinal absorption of curcumin.

**8 ounces cow's milk, soy milk or nut milk, warmed**

**½ teaspoon (¼ teaspoon for kids younger than 6) turmeric**

**¼ teaspoon honey**

Combine warm milk and turmeric in a mug and add honey.

In addition to the relative lack of human research, a few other cautions bear discussion. Lynne Howells, a researcher in the Department of Cancer Studies and Molecular Medicine at the University of Leicester, United Kingdom, has published a dozen papers on curcumin and cancer. She sums up the research by saying, "Most of the laboratory-based evidence for curcumin does appear favorable, but we do have to be aware that there are limited reports of potential for adverse effects." For instance, in one mouse study, curcumin promoted lung cancer. However, most other studies have shown the opposite. Howells adds, "As cancer is such a diverse and multifaceted disease, there are potentially some people who may benefit from interventions, and some who may not." In addition, the ideal dosage isn't known.

### How to Use Turmeric

**TOPICAL USES:** For inflamed skin, apply the juice from the fresh rhizome (grate it, then bundle in cheesecloth and squeeze onto skin) or use powdered, dried turmeric to make pastes and oils by mixing it with aloe vera gel or a skin oil such as olive or jojoba oil. You can make a face mask by blending 2 tablespoons plain yogurt with ¼ teaspoon turmeric powder. If you're dark-skinned,

topical turmeric creates an appealing glow. If you're fair, turmeric might temporarily make you look sallow. You might want to try a test patch before using it.

**INTERNAL USES:** Fresh and dried turmeric are key ingredients in many Indian and Asian recipes. Dried, powdered turmeric has a mild taste and can be blended into many foods (even smoothies and—I tried this today—whole-grain pancakes). Roehrig shared a couple of his favorite recipes, to the left and on the opposite page.

For health challenges, Roehrig recommends encapsulated turmeric. Blend 10 parts turmeric powder with 1 part black pepper and pour into size 00 capsules. Start with 1 to 2 capsules a day (¼ to ½ teaspoon). Build to 2 capsules at every meal.

Most commercial products concentrate curcumin. Take as directed. Because this compound is poorly absorbed from the intestinal tract and rapidly broken down, some manufacturers have devised methods to improve bioavailability. Formulations include combining curcumin with piperine (from black pepper) or a phospholipid (a compound composed of a fatty substance and phosphorus) or even making it tiny (curcumin nanoparticles). Another experimental product allows curcumin to be delivered into the lungs with an inhaler.

**SAFETY:** Used as a culinary spice, turmeric is safe. People in India and Asia have consumed it for hundreds of years. Because lab research shows that turmeric can stimulate uterine contractions, pregnant women are advised not to take medicinal doses (e.g., encapsulated turmeric and products that concentrate curcumin). Otherwise, studies lasting up to eight months in length indicate that supplemental turmeric and curcumin are safe. Doses up to 8 grams a day of curcumin cause only mild side effects, primarily stomach upset, nausea and diarrhea.

Check with your doctor before combining concentrated extracts with medications. Because curcumin can counteract high blood sugar, medicinal doses shouldn't be combined with diabetes medications without medical supervision. Because curcumin inhibits platelets (cell fragments circulating in the blood that form clots), supplements are not recommended in combination with antiplatelet drugs (aspirin, Plavix and others) or anticoagulants (heparin, Coumadin). However, one study found that 2 to 4 grams a day did not alter bleeding times. Curcumin supplements may also affect the activity of liver enzymes that break down drugs, altering levels in the blood. Howells advises people with cancer to be particularly careful and to check with their doctor before combining curcumin extracts with chemotherapy.

LINDA B. WHITE, M.D., is a freelance writer and the coauthor of *The Herbal Drugstore* and *500 Time-Tested Home Remedies and the Science Behind Them*. The second edition of her college text, *Health Now: An Integrative Approach to Personal Health*, will be published in January 2016.



## | RECIPES |

### TURMERIC PASTE

This paste will help heal mild burns, abrasions, insect bites or otherwise inflamed skin. Apply a thin layer and cover with gauze. Beware that turmeric will stain clothing. For internal use, blend ½ teaspoon of this paste into your favorite smoothie or milk. You can also toss in a pinch of salt and pepper and use it to season sautéed vegetables or, after thinning the paste with additional oil, rub onto meats or tofu before cooking.

**1 tablespoon ground turmeric**  
**2 tablespoons just-boiled water**  
**2 teaspoons coconut oil or olive oil**

Put turmeric in a small bowl. Stir in hot water. Blend in oil. Store unused portion in the refrigerator.

### GOLDEN BROTH

Lance Roehrig experimented in the kitchen until he found “the perfect broth.” The magic ingredient? Turmeric.

**½ cup chopped carrots**  
**½ cup chopped celery**  
**½ cup diced bell pepper**  
**½ cup diced tomato**  
**1 tablespoon ghee (clarified butter)**  
**½ teaspoon turmeric powder**  
**8 cups water**  
**½ teaspoon salt**

1. In a stock pot, sauté vegetables in ghee for 4 minutes.
2. Stir in turmeric and sauté another minute.
3. Pour in water. Bring to a boil, add salt, and simmer until vegetables are tender and water level reduces about 25 percent. If you want clear broth, strain out vegetables and use as a base for soups, curries and sauces. Otherwise, enjoy as a vegetable soup.

# Legacy of Home



Helping people realize their dreams, the Wrightman family builds heirloom homes—  
and creates their own healthy oasis—in Ontario.

BY JESSICA KELLNER | PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEVE WHARTON



**GROWING UP IN BRACEBRIDGE**, Ontario, Canada, deep in the heart of the rugged and breathtaking Muskoka region—named the No. 1 pick for “10 Best Trips of Summer” and one of the “100 Places That Can Change Your Child’s Life” by *National Geographic Traveler*—is a guaranteed way to develop a lifelong passion for the beauty of nature. In their idyllic log home, Rob and Marilyn Wrightman raised sons Mark and Kyle next to a 200-acre parcel of land with trails for hiking in summer and snowshoeing in winter; lakes and rivers for kayaking and canoeing; snowmobile trails; and a 150-foot gorge with a waterfall.

Mark says growing up among the natural beauty gave him not only an appreciation of nature, but also “an appreciation for home.” Although many people grow up in the city and dream of retiring in nature, Mark feels he got a jump-start on the relaxation, serenity and healthfulness of living in connection with the cycles of the planet. And creating that dream—of living in harmony with nature—is exactly what his family provides to others through their business, True North Log Homes ([truenorthloghomes.com](http://truenorthloghomes.com)).

The Wrightmans designed their own dream home with an open kitchen and a long bar-style countertop, which enables the family to make meal preparation a group activity.

## Building a Company

In the late ’70s, Rob’s father, Ron, came up with several ideas to improve the efficiency of log homes. Popular for their aesthetic appeal, log cabins were notoriously expensive to maintain and heat. Because wood is a natural material that can shrink over time, as a building material it often caused problems in upkeep and airtightness. According to his son, Ron possesses a remarkable ability to see the problems with a machine or building technique and figure out how to solve them—and between them, Rob and Ron have the numbers to prove it as the holders of more than 18 patents in building and machinery.

His fix to the efficiency problem revolutionized the way log homes were built, and enabled people to build using this natural and beautiful material without having to plan for additional expenses to maintain the home. The result was the eventual founding of True North Log Homes, which Rob and Ron ran together until Ron’s retirement in 1996.

## Building Green

Rob Wrightman, CEO of True North Log Homes, knows his company isn’t the only construction company focused on energy efficiency. But, he says, he takes pride in the fact that True North achieves that efficiency without a reliance on petrochemical materials. “The whole housing industry is focused on energy efficiency being the supreme thing, and the unfortunate part is a lot of the industry is so focused on energy efficiency they’ve lost touch with those efficiencies being green,” Rob says. “We’re using something that’s very green, that has great efficiency, and making it better so it has less impact as a footprint, as it relates to the planet.”

The Wrightmans say that by using a natural material—Forest Stewardship Council-certified wood from incredibly well-managed forests—they’re creating something that will have long-term value, and they’re investing in the growth of forests rather than the production of petrochemical building supplies. “That’s the whole premise—it’s closer to its natural state,” Rob says of the building material.

Rob’s son Mark Wrightman reiterates his father’s passion for the lifecycle of their homes. “Think about 250 years from now and the life expectancy of a log home: You could take the logs apart and reuse them, perhaps making the logs into furniture. Then think about the insulation from conventional houses: What do they do with that? It goes to the landfill. It’s not a reusable resource.”



TOP TO BOTTOM: Switching to a vegan diet has led the Wrightmans to incorporate more homegrown produce into their cooking. ■ Kyle Wrightman (standing) counts pasta dishes among his culinary specialties. ■ The Wrightmans take rescue dogs Lola (left) and Denver hiking in summer and snowshoeing in winter. ■ ABOVE RIGHT: A space-efficient island and nearby pantry house condiments, linens and more.



Thanks to the longevity of wood as a building material, and the superefficient building techniques they use, the Wrightmans consider themselves in the business of helping people create their dream homes. “It’s an opportunity to leave a legacy,” Rob says. “There are log cabins that are 750 years old in Russia and people are still living in them. You are building something that stands the test of time, whereas stick-frame homes, they’re tearing them down after 30 or 40 years. This is a different mindset.”

Many of their clients are not only creating homes but heirlooms they plan to pass on through the generations of their family. “I would say that’s one of the most rewarding parts of our business,” Mark says. “It’s a huge compliment that someone would choose you to be involved when they’re building their oasis. They’ve chosen you to be part of their heritage.” Marilyn says, because these are people’s dream homes, their experiences with clients often last for many years. They might start researching the idea of building a log home decades before they actually move into the home. “We collaborate with them for so long, the home becomes enriched in our hearts as well as in theirs. It’s a partnership. You spend years sometimes with a client and you gain a relationship. You’re creating their dream.”

## Building a Home

When they’re not helping their clients create their dream homes, the Wrightmans are busy rounding out their own sanctum. The family members are avid home cooks who love spending time together in the kitchen. Becoming vegan a little over a year ago only enhanced this hobby, as the family began to experiment with new spices, cooking techniques and recipes. One of their favorite recipes to tinker with is pesto, which they make with a slew of ingredients from their kitchen garden—grown mainly to support their vegetable-based diet. The family has been working to expand their garden and this year grew an abundance of kale, carrots, zucchini and other squash, and a bounty of herbs. “It’s a different



lifestyle,” Rob says of the change. “There’s lots of chopping! We make lots of stir-fries and pasta with pesto. I’ve been experimenting with making all sorts of pesto dishes.”

Both Marilyn and Rob say the switch has benefitted their health in many observable ways, and in ways they weren’t expecting. “You have more energy,” Marilyn says. “You don’t have those highs and lows throughout the day. Even my complexion is better, and my hair is better and not as dry. It’s a multitude of changes that you can actually see.”

As another benefit, the family appreciates that consuming a whole foods, plant-based diet helps reduce the environmental footprint of their diet.

## Building a Future

Considering how much the Wrightmans love the idea of creating heirloom homes for families to pass down from generation to generation, it makes sense that their own livelihood has turned into an heirloom, as well, founded by Rob and Ron and carried on by Mark and Kyle, who are both now enthusiastic participants in their family business.

Both in their 20s, Mark and Kyle have both helped build homes, establish patents, met with clients and much more. “Kyle and I have both grown up in the business, whether packing components, milling logs or doing sales,” Mark says. “I built for years in high school and college. I’ve built about 20 houses and done top to bottom about seven houses.”

After so many years of seeing their family help others create their dream homes, Kyle and Mark were eager to develop their own ideas of the perfect dwelling. Today, Mark is finishing up his own home and Kyle is in the process of building his. “There’s great satisfaction in being part of the construction of your own home,” Mark says. “I can’t think of a client we’ve worked with that wasn’t involved in the process. There’s great satisfaction in completing something like this.”

JESSICA KELLNER loves the idea of creating homes to last generations that provide a lasting sense of place for years to come.

## Building Children’s Futures

Many years ago, when their sons, Mark and Kyle, were both young children, personal experiences led Marilyn and Rob Wrightman to want to do something to support pediatric medicine. A family member was in the children’s hospital for a surgery, and another patient, a girl younger than 2, was in the hospital with her. “She never stopped crying from the moment I went in to the moment I left,” Rob says. “It was a really emotional situation. I walked into the waiting room and thought I was going to be ill. That experience really touched me.” After that day, Rob and Marilyn decided to start giving back to that hospital, The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, Canada’s most research-intensive hospital and the largest center in the country dedicated to improving children’s health. Rob and Marilyn use their company’s factory tour and construction seminars—which educate people on the process of building a log home—as a forum to support the hospital. Every \$10 fee paid for the tour is matched by True North Log Homes and donated entirely to the hospital. To date, they’ve donated about \$150,000 to the SickKids Foundation ([sickkidsfoundation.com](http://sickkidsfoundation.com)).



ABOVE LEFT: A stunning bath alcove is one of the Wrightman home’s most luxurious features. ■ ABOVE TOP TO BOTTOM: A simple wood vanity adheres to the home’s aesthetic of rustic elegance. ■ “Dovetail Corners” help maintain True North Log Homes’ durability—designed so all angles lead out, they ensure water can’t remain at the joint.

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Circle #15; see card pg 81

# Organic Garden

GROWING + HARVESTING + TIPS



## An Indoor Winter Herb Garden

Keep eating healthful fresh herbs throughout the colder months with this advice for indoor success with culinary herbs.

**PACKED WITH FLAVOR**, brimming with antioxidants and incredibly easy to cultivate, culinary herbs are the perfect complement to any meal. And while fresh herbs can get pricey at the grocery store, growing our own herbs makes it easy to integrate them into daily meals. When cold temperatures make it impossible to keep fresh green herbs growing outside (or if you're short on garden space all year), growing culinary complements inside is an option worth exploring.



## Pest Patrol

Even living a lovely, sheltered life indoors, herbs can sometimes become infested with small, pesky bugs. Aphids, spider mites, white flies and fungus gnats are most common. Pick them off by hand if the problem is slight (and you can see them!). If that doesn't control it and the situation is getting out of hand, ramp up your control with a safe insecticidal soap, such as Safer Brand Insect Killing Soap (saferbrand.com). Spray plants once a week until pests are gone.

The writer of this article, EMILY ENGLISH, spent many years farming small-scale, organic fruits and vegetables. She now works to increase access and availability of healthy food for all through research, policy development and community organizing in her home state of Arkansas. She is still an avid gardener and most enjoys her time when she's putzing away in her home veggie patch with her family.

Although we would all love it if culinary herbs grew as easily as the ivy tumbling over the bookcase or the peace lily thriving in that dim corner of the living room, that's simply not the case. Culinary herbs require a higher degree of maintenance, and each has its own unique requirements for abundant growth. Not all herbs adapt well to indoor conditions, but a few are low-maintenance enough that almost anyone can keep them going all year. Use the following tricks to unlock the door to a vibrant indoor herb garden.

## The Basics

Although each herb has its own needs, several commonalities exist. Grouping your indoor herb garden is often the most efficient way to provide the proper light and moisture needs for all of your plants.

➡➡ **LIGHT:** Most important to the growth of healthy herbs indoors is sufficient light—especially in winter. A south- or southwestern-facing window can often provide the minimal six to eight hours of direct light required; if you don't have a window that gets this much light, you will need additional fluorescent lighting. Ample fluorescent light can come from two 40-watt cool white fluorescent bulbs. If supplementing natural light with fluorescent light, your plants will need two supplemental hours of man-made light for each missing hour of natural light—for example, if your plant needs six hours of natural light but your window can only provide four, then you'll need to replace the missing two hours of natural light with four hours of fluorescent light. Plants should be no closer than 6 inches and no further than 15 inches from the fluorescent bulb. If growing in completely natural light, rotate pots every three to four days to ensure that all leaves receive equal exposure.

➡➡ **SOIL:** Herbs prefer well-draining soil. To ensure that their roots don't become waterlogged, make your own potting soil by mixing equal parts of these four ingredients together: sand, perlite, peat moss and organic commercial potting soil. All of these products can be found at your local garden-supply center. Porous clay pots breathe better than plastic pots and promote drainage and circulation.



Group plants with similar light and humidity needs to create an ideal environment for your indoor garden.

➡➡ **WATER:** Herbs' water demands vary. Some, such as basil and oregano, prefer near-dry soil most of the time, while others need consistent moisture. Read on for individual plant needs. In general, herbs do not do well in soft water. The high sodium content will harm them. If your soil begins to form a white crusty surface, which indicates sodium build-up, replace it with fresh soil.

➡➡ **HUMIDITY:** Because we consume the leaves, we want our herbs' foliage to remain soft and succulent. Take care not to place herbs next to a hot air vent. They prefer cooler air (between 55 and 70 degrees) with plenty of humidity and good air circulation. If your indoor air tends to be dry, place the pot on a bed of rocks and fill that tray with water to the top of the rocks. As the water evaporates, the humid air will circulate amongst the leaves. Group herbs about 5 inches apart from one another to create a humid environment that still provides air circulation.

➡➡ **FERTILIZER:** Herbs appreciate a light fertilizing every two weeks. Good options include fish emulsion, seaweed or a general all-purpose organic 12-12-12 water-soluble fertilizer. Overfertilizing can be damaging, so take care not to overdo it. >>>

| **RECIPE** |**FRESH HERB BUTTER**

Make this fresh herb butter for gourmet flavor with very little work. Use it on crusty bread, as a topping for fish, or mixed into gnocchi or ravioli.

- ½ cup butter, softened**  
**2 tablespoons chopped herbs**  
 (chives, mints, parsley, sage)  
**1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice**

- 1.** Stir together all ingredients in a small bowl.
- 2.** Spoon into a small serving bowl or chill 15 minutes and shape into a log.

—PATSY BELL HOBSON



Fresh herb butters are incredibly simple to make, yet lend a gourmet touch to meals.



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## GARDEN **TIPS & TECHNIQUES**

### Indoor Herb Garden Plant List

Growing herbs well indoors is doable for anyone willing to create a suitable growing environment, whether with many hours of direct sunlight available via a southern exposure window or an artificial lighting setup. Although it may require a little more maintenance than your standard houseplant, the nutritional and flavor payoff is well worth it.

**BASIL** is a heat-loving annual, so it needs a lot of light and prefers soil that is barely wet; take care not to overwater it. As the plant grows, pinch off the tips to inhibit flower growth, which will direct the plant's energy toward leaf growth. Basil's oil is damaged by heat, so add it at the end of cooking or as a garnish on pasta, pizza and sandwiches. Blend fresh basil with olive oil, lemon juice, pine nuts or walnuts, Parmesan and garlic to make a summery pesto.

**CHIVES** prefer well-watered soil. Harvest by cutting the long, slender leaves an inch above the soil. Chives work well anywhere you want a mild onion flavor. They are a perfect complement to potatoes and taste awesome mixed into yogurt-based salad dressings.

**MINT** is a vivacious grower that prefers moist soil and can survive on as little as two to three hours of direct sun per day. Mint makes a perfect soothing, digestion-enhancing tea. Mint pesto is a tasty addition to chicken dishes, and mint is also an excellent herb to brighten up pasta dishes and grain salads. Cut tips back to encourage healthy growth.

**OREGANO** needs its soil to dry out between watering. Another heat-

loving herb, it's quite hardy but requires a full day's worth (six to eight hours) of light. Cut or pinch off oregano at its tip to harvest and throw into pasta or pizza sauce for depth and warmth. Oregano is also a quintessential flavor in Mexican cuisine.

**PARSLEY** requires well-watered soil, especially when young, and can survive in partial shade or full sun. Cut back its leafy growth and chop finely for bright additions to a traditional salad, Middle Eastern tabbouleh or load it into a Turkish-inspired olive oil potato salad.

**ROSEMARY** will tolerate neither dry nor water-logged soil, so take care to keep it moist but not overwatered. Plants can grow tall and need ample space for their root systems and growth, so choose a pot at least 6 inches deep for young plants and 8 to 10 inches deep for older plants. Transplant annually as they grow. Large plants with a couple of years of growth need about 14 inches in diameter. Harvest rosemary's tender foliage and add it to roasted root vegetables five minutes before you remove them from the oven.

**SAGE** needs lots of sun and well-drained soil that is allowed to dry out completely between waterings. Cut the tips back regularly. Sage is a crucial flavor in holiday stuffing—it pairs perfectly with turkey, duck and chicken. Sage butter is delicious on gnocchi, ravioli or trout. And you can combine sage with parsley, rosemary and thyme for a classic herb mix for soups and risotto.

**THYME** prefers full sun and well-drained soil with lots of humidity. Strip the tiny leaves from their woody stem to pair with lemon and garlic in fish and pasta dishes.

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# Soil Science

Your garden soil's pH helps determine how well crops will grow. Learn how to test your soil's pH and how to apply the results of your findings for a more productive garden.

**IN LATE FALL AND EARLY WINTER**, before the ground is frozen solid in most of the country, it's the perfect time to brush up on knowledge that can help us build a better garden come spring. One way we can help ensure our garden crops grow to their maximum potential is to gain an understanding of our soil's pH. The pH describes the relative acidity or alkalinity of the soil's makeup, and it has important implications for plant health and growth. Soil pH impacts beneficial fungi and bacteria in the soil and influences whether essential minerals are available for uptake by plant roots.

## What is Soil pH?

All pH is measured on a scale from 0 (most acidic) to 14 (most alkaline, or basic); 7.0 is neutral. Most food crops prefer a pH of 6.0 to 6.5, but you can have a productive food garden at pH levels between 5.5 and 7.5. A difference of just 0.5 may not seem like much, but the pH scale is logarithmic, which means, for example, a pH of 7.0 is actually 10 times less acidic than a pH of 6.0. Potatoes and most berries, which grow best in more acidic soil, are the main exceptions to the average preferred pH range.

A soil's pH results from interactions among native rocks, plants and weather conditions over many years, and it varies with climate and physical surroundings. In moist climates that support dense forests, such as those east of the Mississippi River and along the Pacific Coast, soil tends to be acidic, with a pH between 4.0 and 5.5. The grasslands of the comparatively dry Midwest often have slightly acidic soil (6.0 to 6.5), while most arid regions, such as the Rocky Mountains, have alkaline soil (7.0 to 7.8).

However, local differences can cause huge variations within these general patterns—for example, weathered limestone can create alkaline patches in otherwise acidic landscapes. Soil is often severely disturbed during construction; sometimes native topsoil is completely lost. Some synthetic fertilizers—mainly those high in

ammonium or sulfur—can also acidify soil, as can tillage methods that reduce soil's levels of organic matter. Acid rain caused by coal combustion began to acidify streams and soil during the late 1800s, and continues to push soil in some regions into the acidic range every time it rains. Finally, some organic matter, such as peat moss and pine needles, acidifies during decomposition.

Alkaline soil occurs in places where soil is formed from limestone or other calcium-rich minerals, and high water-evaporation rates common in arid climates aggravate the problem by loading topsoil with accumulated salts. Many plants can still thrive when grown in alkaline soil that has been generously enriched with organic matter, which also improves soil's ability to retain water. Mulches also will slow buildup of salts in plants' root zones by reducing surface evaporation.

## How to Test Soil pH

Soil chemistry is complex, so how can we boil it down to help us in our gardens? If your crops seem to be thriving, you probably don't need to worry about your pH. But if you find that plants just don't seem to be growing as well as you'd like, you should probably have your soil checked with a pH test. The cost for a basic soil evaluation by a state soil-testing lab ranges from free to \$25, depending on the state, and typically includes a pH test along with results for major and sometimes minor nutrients. Soil-test kits with detailed instructions are usually available at extension service offices, or you can order them by mail.

If one bed or small section of your garden goes wonky, you might try a





The LaMotte Soil pH Test Kit is one of the most accurate home tests on the market. Find it at [groworganic.com](http://groworganic.com).

home pH test kit. When a team of Missouri extension experts submitted soil samples to 82 soil-testing laboratories and compared the labs' results with those from do-it-yourself pH-measuring kits, the \$20 LaMotte Soil pH Test Kit—available at Peaceful Valley Farm & Garden Supply ([groworganic.com](http://groworganic.com))—earned high accuracy ratings. Personally, I like pH color kits because they're fun to use, and a practiced eye can detect small variations in the shades of orange (acid) and green (neutral to alkaline) in the results.

### Start by Adding Compost

Raising the organic matter content of soil will usually move the pH of both acidic and alkaline soils toward the neutral range. This is because organic matter plays a buffering role, protecting soil from becoming overly acidic or alkaline. Finished compost usually has a near-neutral pH, so the primary method used to improve soil with extreme pH issues should be regular infusions of compost. If your pH readings are only slightly acidic or slightly alkaline, compost and organic mulches may be the only amendments you need to keep your crops happy and your garden growing well. >>

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## Ideal Acidity for Various Plants

Most fruits and vegetables like slightly acidic soil with a pH between 6.0 to 6.5, but there are a few exceptions. For example, berries and potatoes like acidic soil, while asparagus loves alkaline conditions.

### FRUITS

Apple .....	5.5 to 6.5
Blueberry, highbush .....	4.5 to 5.5
Cherry, sweet .....	6.5 to 8.0
Grape .....	5.5 to 7.0
Pear, common .....	6.5 to 7.5
Plum, American .....	6.5 to 8.5
Raspberry, black .....	5.5 to 7.0
Raspberry, red .....	6.0 to 7.5
Strawberry .....	5.5 to 6.5



### VEGETABLES

Asparagus .....	6.0 to 8.0
Bean .....	6.0 to 7.0
Beet .....	6.5 to 8.0
Broccoli .....	6.0 to 7.0
Cabbage .....	6.0 to 7.5
Cantaloupe .....	6.0 to 7.5
Carrot .....	5.5 to 7.0
Corn .....	5.5 to 7.5
Cucumber .....	5.5 to 7.0
Eggplant .....	5.5 to 6.5
Lettuce .....	6.0 to 7.0
Onion .....	6.0 to 7.0
Pea .....	6.0 to 7.5
Pepper .....	5.5 to 7.0
Potato .....	4.8 to 6.5
Sweet potato .....	5.2 to 6.0
Radish .....	6.0 to 7.0
Rhubarb .....	5.5 to 7.0
Spinach .....	6.0 to 7.5
Squash .....	6.0 to 7.0
Tomato .....	5.5 to 7.5



Adding organic material is the best way to maintain healthy soil with a near-neutral pH.

## Correcting Acidic Soil

The standard treatment for overly acidic soil is lime, an inexpensive soil amendment made from ground limestone that slowly raises pH over a period of months. Dolomitic lime is usually preferred because it contains both calcium and magnesium. But if you have dense soil and a soil test indicates excess magnesium, try low-magnesium, calcium-rich powdered crab or oyster shells as your liming material. Follow the label, as products differ in application rates, which vary with soil type. You can't apply a correct amount of lime unless you know your soil's pH first, and if you apply too much, it will be extremely difficult to correct. Err on the cautious side by applying too little lime at first.

After the pH of acidic soil is raised above 6.0 using amendments, I've found it can be maintained with a light, yearly application of alkaline woodstove ashes. In addition to containing enough calcium and magnesium to have a liming effect, wood ashes contain an array of micronutrients. The key is to use them sparingly, in small, dispersed amounts, and to never add wood ashes or lime to soil with a pH higher than 6.5. A quart of wood ashes (1 pound) is about right for 50 square feet of cultivated space. In larger spaces, apply no more than 20 pounds of ashes per 1,000 square feet of garden bed.

If you avoid acidic chemical fertilizers, a normally acidic soil may not require liming again for several years, if ever. Then again, if your soil is porous sand in a high-rainfall area, pH testing may show a need for liming every other year. Just never apply lime unless a pH test indicates it is needed, and never use it where you're growing plants that prefer acidic soil, such as blueberries and azaleas.

## Correcting Alkaline Soil

If you have exceptionally alkaline, high-pH soil, you can often tame it by adding organic matter and powdered sulfur. But sulfur may do little good in alkaline soil that is rich in free lime, or calcium carbonate. Test for free lime by covering a soil sample with vinegar; if it bubbles, you have free lime and should consider gardening in beds filled with non-native soil.

Extension experts in places where alkaline soil predominates emphasize that most plants will grow well in organically improved soil with a pH as high as 7.5, and your primary goal should be improving soil quality with organic matter—not lowering pH. Alkaline soil can be stubborn about releasing phosphorus to plants, so amend it every chance you get with composted manure. The humic acids in both composted manure and vermicompost help make phosphorus available to plants, as does the presence of rotted plant tissues from both regular compost and cover crops. Acidic mulches, such as pine needles, can help lower soil pH slightly; other mulches have little effect on soil pH.

The garden soil I've nurtured organically for years tests at a near-neutral pH. My newer beds that have tight clay, on the other hand, test acidic. Monitoring soil pH helps me gauge how well I'm improving the soil, reducing effects of acid rain and maximizing the soil's microbial activity—which all add up to a better garden.

—BARBARA PLEASANT

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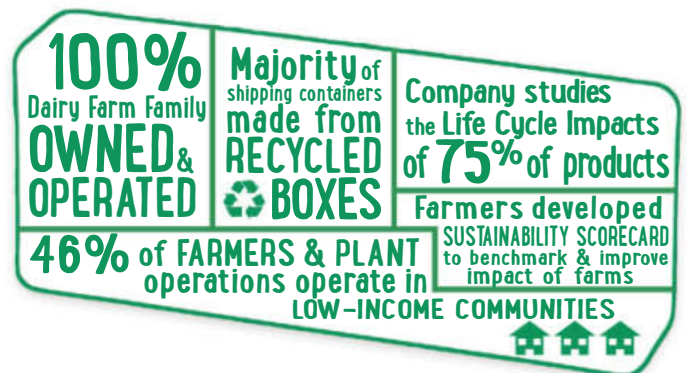
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# Growing, Harvesting & Using Parsley

It's easy to enjoy the many health-promoting properties of parsley:

The plant is a cinch to grow and is one of the world's most versatile culinary herbs.



**WHILE MOST PEOPLE** probably think of parsley as nothing more than a garnish, this herb warrants greater inclusion in our diets and natural medicine cabinets. Not only is parsley packed with nutrients, it can help prevent diabetes; can prevent and treat kidney stones; and is a proven cancer preventive. We would all do well to use more of this humble and often-overlooked herb.

## A Brief History of Parsley

Native to southern Europe, parsley has been in use for more than 2,000 years. Like many of the world's most treasured foods, parsley has been transported all over the globe and it now calls many places around the world home. According to the ancient Roman statesman Pliny, "not a salad or sauce should be presented without it."

While we tend to think of parsley primarily as food, our ancestors thought of it primarily as medicine. It was in this capacity that they used parsley to treat conditions such as gallstones, arthritis and insect bites. It was even used as an aphrodisiac and to curb drunkenness, as ancient people believed parsley could absorb the intoxicating fumes of wine, preventing it from causing drunkenness. While we now know this doesn't actually work, we also recognize that many of parsley's other reported uses have scientific validity.

## | RECIPE |

### **GLUTEN-FREE TABBOULEH SALAD**

Popular in Middle Eastern and Mediterranean countries, tabbouleh is traditionally made with wheat bulgur, but it gets an easy gluten-free twist and nutrition boost thanks to the delicious seed quinoa. This recipe is quick and easy to prepare, but the flavors deepen after it sits in the refrigerator for an hour or two, or even overnight.

**2 tomatoes, chopped**  
**1 large bunch fresh parsley, finely chopped**  
**1 clove garlic, minced**  
**1 green onion, chopped**  
**2 cups cooked quinoa**  
**Juice of 3 lemons**  
**2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil**  
**½ teaspoon unrefined sea salt**  
**Pinch cayenne**

- 1.** In a large bowl, combine tomatoes, parsley, garlic, green onion and quinoa.
- 2.** In a separate bowl, whisk together lemon juice, olive oil, salt and cayenne. Pour over salad and toss to coat.
- 3.** Store salad in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 4 days. The flavors will mingle, making the salad taste even better.

*Adapted with permission from  
The Ultimate pH Solution  
by Michelle Schoffro Cook.*

## Growing Parsley

Parsley, both flat- and curly-leaf varieties, is incredibly easy to grow. Considering the herb suffers a loss of flavor and vitality after being shipped, you might want to keep its culinary and healing properties at your fingertips by growing it at home. Parsley plants are prolific biennial plants, meaning they grow for two years before you need to start new plants from seed. In winter, you can grow parsley indoors in a sunny spot (see page 77 for tips on growing herbs indoors). Be sure to water sufficiently to prevent seedlings from drying out.

If you want to transplant parsley to the outdoor garden, transplant plants that are at least 10 to 12 weeks old 6 to 8 inches apart, after the threat of frost has passed. Parsley particularly likes to be planted near tomatoes, corn or asparagus, according to *The Old Farmer's Almanac*. In spring, you can also plant parsley directly from seed or handy "seed tape"—seeds embedded in a long piece of paper that you plant directly to ensure even growth.

## Harvesting Parsley

To harvest, wait until leaf stems have three segments. After that, cut outer portions of the plant as needed. To dry parsley, tie 1-inch bundles of stems together with elastic bands and hang upside down until dry. Once dry, store in an airtight jar. You can also chop or purée fresh parsley (stems included) with olive oil or water and freeze in ice cube trays. Once frozen, move the cubes into a freezer container for storage. Simply pop a cube into a soup, stew or pasta, or thaw and use to make vinaigrette or parsley pesto.

## Using Parsley

Parsley is high in many nutrients, including iron and vitamins A and C. Parsley is also a good source of sulphur, which is essential to a healthy liver. Parsley leaves and stems can be chopped and added to soups, stews,



Flat-leaf Italian parsley is usually preferred by chefs.

salads, pasta dishes, fresh juices and more. Parsley is one of the most versatile herbs, making it easy for us to benefit from its many nutritive properties.

### ➔ ANTICANCER POWERHOUSE:

A recent study in the *Journal of the Science of Food and Agriculture* found that parsley has potent anticancer properties and works against cancer in a few distinct ways: It acts as an antioxidant, destroying free radicals before they damage cells; it protects DNA from damage that can lead to cancer or other diseases; and it inhibits proliferation and migration of cancer cells.

### ➔ DIABETES PREVENTION:

Exciting new research in the *Journal of Nutrition* found that eating foods high in a naturally occurring nutrient known as myricetin can decrease risk of developing type 2 diabetes by 26 percent. Parsley is one of the best sources of myricetin.

➔ CURB KIDNEY STONES: In a study published in *The Journal of Urology* in 2012, researchers found that ingesting parsley leaves and roots reduced the number of calcium oxalate deposits (found in kidney stones) in animals. The researchers also found that ingesting parsley leaves and roots helped break down kidney stones in animals.

—MICHELLE SCHOFFRO COOK



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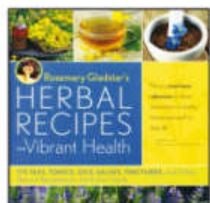
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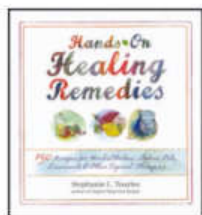
## Health & Wellness



### Rosemary Gladstar's Herbal Recipes for Vibrant Health

This practical compendium of herbal wisdom is a must-have for everyone. Promote vibrant health and radiant beauty, soothe everyday ailments, and ease stress and anxiety with 175 simple herbal recipes for everything from infant colic, dry skin, cold symptoms and insomnia. Author Rosemary Gladstar guides you every step of the way, from the growing and ecologically sound harvesting of herbs to basic preparations and dosage directions.

#4885 \$16.95

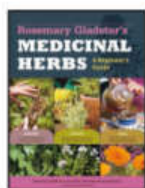


### Hands-On Healing Remedies

Stephanie Tourles offers 150 original recipes for herbal balms, oils, salves, liniments and other topical ointments you can make yourself to treat a wide range of conditions,

from headaches and backaches to arthritis, tendonitis, fungal infections, anxiety, cuts and scrapes, insomnia, splinters and cracked skin.

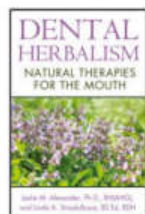
#6496 \$18.95



### Rosemary Gladstar's Medicinal Herbs: A Beginner's Guide

With Rosemary Gladstar's expert advice, anyone can make their own herbal remedies for common ailments, such as aloe lotion for poison ivy, dandelion-burdock tincture for sluggish digestion and lavender-lemon balm tea for stress relief. Gladstar profiles 33 of the most common and versatile healing plants and then shows you exactly how to grow, harvest, prepare and use them.

#5948 \$14.95



### Dental Herbalism

Our oral health is intimately linked with our overall health and well-being. Medical herbalist Leslie Alexander and registered dental hygienist Linda Straub-Bruce detail how to use 41 safe and effective herbs for the mouth for optimum oral health, prevention of decay and inflammation, and relief from pain and discomfort. The authors provide recipes for herbal toothpastes and rinses, poultices for pain and inflammation, and teas and tinctures for intervention, prevention and daily care.

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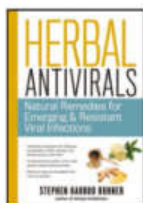


### 500 Time-Tested Home Remedies and the Science Behind Them

From insect bites, insomnia and upset stomach to nasal congestion, stress and heart health, this book offers easy, effective recipes

to bolster your resistance to illness, ease aches and pains, and manage minor ailments naturally. The authors explain the science behind these remedies, debunk common myths and let you know when to call the doctor.

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### Herbal Antivirals

Emerging viruses are becoming more virile and aggressive, and traditional medications are becoming less effective against them. In *Herbal Antivirals*, his companion to the best-selling *Herbal Antibiotics*, Stephen Harrod Buhner offers in-depth

instructions on how to prepare and use herbal formulations to strengthen the immune system and treat viral infections such as SARS, influenza and encephalitis.

#6864 \$24.95



### Herbal Goddess

Master herbalist Amy Jirsa offers recipes and ideas for exploring and embracing the distinctive qualities of 12 powerful healing herbs—chamomile, rose, dandelion, holy basil, nettle, calendula, lavender, turmeric, echinacea,

elder, cinnamon and ginger. Through delicious teas and foods, luxurious salves, skin- and hair-care treatments, complementary yoga poses, meditations, and more, you'll deepen your appreciation of these herbs and learn how to best use them for improved health and wellness.

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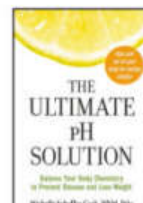


### The Best Natural Homemade Skin & Hair Care Products

Author Mar Gomez features oils that have wonderful skin-care properties and specific formulas for all sorts of skin conditions. With these easy-

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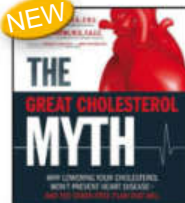


### The Ultimate pH Solution

Beginning a healthier lifestyle can be as easy as starting your day sipping a glass of water with a squeeze of lemon juice. Drinking this simple drink is only one of the many ways, all outlined in *The Ultimate pH*

*Solution*, that you can change your body's pH and ward off disease. This book includes the real-life success stories of people who have overcome disease and lost weight by balancing their pH levels, along with 50 recipes for delicious pH-powered dishes.

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### The Great Cholesterol Myth

Best-selling health authors Jonny Bowden, Ph. D., and Stephen Sinatra, M.D., give readers a four-part strategy based on the latest studies and clinical findings for effectively preventing,

managing and reversing heart disease, focusing on diet, exercise, supplements, and stress and anger management.

#7709 \$19.99



### Heal Local

This innovative guide demonstrates that by harnessing multifaceted whole plants, we can rely on homegrown or regionally produced herbs, rather than importing exotics and non-natives. Many herbals overwhelm

their readers, presenting a list of hundreds of herbs, each with a different purpose. *Heal Local* empowers readers by showing that you don't need to know everything about every herb on the planet to create a complete home apothecary.

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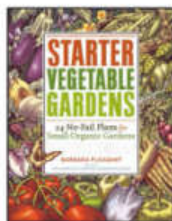
### Weekend Wonder Detox

Detox regimens are not always easy or completely healthy, but natural health and wellness expert Michelle Schoffro Cook offers a new approach to purifying your body. Cook's quiz helps pinpoint areas of

your health and body that need attention. Then she offers targeted two-day tune-up plans. These mini-detoxes help you reset your natural body chemistry (which can go haywire from environmental toxins and the standard American diet).

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## Home & Garden



### Starter Vegetable Gardens

Master gardener Barbara Pleasant takes the guesswork and anxiety out of growing food, explaining in simple language exactly how to start, maintain and eventually expand an organic vegetable garden, even in the smallest of spaces. Choose one of 24 no-fail, small-scale garden plans and find out how easy it is to enjoy your own fresh food all season long!

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### Simple Gifts

In *Simple Gifts*, Jennifer Worick offers step-by-step instructions for creating easy and inspired handmade gifts that won't break the bank. Learn how to stitch a wine bag for your favorite foodie, sew pajama pants for a tried-and-true friend, roast coffee beans for an office pal, or felt a ring for your sweetheart. From a sweet knitted apron to a hand-embroidered handkerchief, these heartfelt, handmade gifts are certain to wow and touch your loved ones.

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### Guerilla Furniture Design

This innovative collection features 35 simple, inexpensive projects that you can make from salvaged and upcycled materials: cardboard, metal, plastic and wood. The projects include tables, shelving units, chairs, lamps, and more, in a variety of styles. Many are stackable and easily portable, and all include instructions for disassembly and disposal when you're ready to repurpose the materials.

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## Food & Recipes



### Whole Grain Baking Made Easy

Written by *Mother Earth Living* food editor Tabitha Alterman, *Whole Grain Baking Made Easy* is a guide for bakers who want to maximize the nutritional value of their breads and desserts while experimenting with delicious new flavors of many different whole grains. The book includes recipes for a wide array of flours and flour blends as well as guidance on all aspects of home milling, such as choosing a mill and properly storing your grain and flour.

#7337 \$24.99

NEW



### The Sweet Side of Ancient Grains

With recipes made from both ancient grains and more familiar 100 percent whole grains, Erin Dooner has created a must-have cookbook for anyone who wants to eat healthy but is "blessed" with a sweet tooth. This book relies on 100 percent whole and ancient grains and incorporates natural sugars wherever possible—all without compromising on results.

#7710 \$22.95



### Gluten-Free Baking for the Holidays

The holidays are a time to celebrate and indulge in baked goods, warm from the oven. Author Jeanne Sauvage has perfected 60 gluten-free recipes with all the flavors of their wheat-filled counterparts. Also included are tips on how wheat-free ingredients work and Sauvage's own gluten-free flour mix.

#6515 \$24.95



### Zero Waste Home

Bea Johnson shares the story of how she simplified her life by reducing her waste. Today, she and her family produce just one quart of garbage a year, and their overall quality of life has changed for the better. This book shares essential how-to advice, secrets and insights based on Johnson's experience. *Zero Waste Home* is a stylish and relatable step-by-step guide that will give you the practical tools to help you improve your health, save money and time, and achieve a brighter future for your family—and the planet.

#6822 \$17.00



### Companion Planting for the Kitchen Gardener

Starting with the basics of organic gardening, such as how to prepare quality soil and the importance of cover crops and organic fertilizer, authors Allison and Tim Greer explain the principles of companion planting, how plants interact, and how you can use that information to your garden's benefit. There is an entire chapter devoted to each of the 15 most popular vegetables with charts, diagrams and descriptions of each—a treasure for gardeners with busy lives who want an easy reference guide for planning their ideal kitchen garden.

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### The Organically Clean Home

Forget about chemical cleaners and pricey "green" products...all you need are a few simple kitchen staples to make your whole house sparkle. *The Organically Clean Home* features 150 easy-to-make recipes for cleaning products filled with all-natural ingredients you can trust (and actually pronounce!). Armed with simple instructions for packaging and storing your homemade cleaners, you'll enjoy turning each room into a beautiful and toxic-free space with fresh-scented products.

#7236 \$15.99

NEW



### Saving the Season

Strawberry jam. Pickled beets. Homegrown tomatoes. These are the tastes of Kevin West's Southern childhood, and they are the tastes that inspired him to "save the season." At least 220 recipes are included in this book, ranging from jams and pickles to cocktails and candies. This book is the ultimate guide for cooks—from the novice to the professional—and the only book you need to save (and savor) the season throughout the entire year.

#7693 \$35.00

NEW



### Fix-It and Forget-It Slow Cooker Magic

No one has enough time these days, but with a slow cooker, anyone can prepare a fantastic meal in minutes! Featuring 550 new, mouthwatering recipes, this book will amaze cooks with the "magic" their slow cookers can perform. In addition to delicious soups, stews and chilis, cooks will also find pizza, cheesecake, cookies, quick breads and dozens of other surprising treats.

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### Old-Fashioned Jams, Jellies and Sweet Preserves

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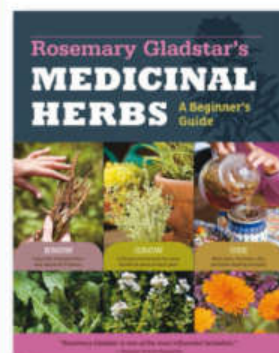
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